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AIRSOFT NEWS

FIRST MILITARY CHARITY TO PAY FOR HYPERBARIC OXYGEN TREATMENT

19th January 2015. Pilgrim Bandits Charity, Hampshire is to fund the very first round of ground breaking Hyperbaric Oxygen Treatment (HBOT) with the HBOT Trust in Edinburgh starting Monday.

Two injured servicemen Ben Parkinson MBE and Stephen Thomas both of whom have sustained life changing wounds including catastrophic brain injuries, are to receive the treatment which is similar in its process to a decompression chamber, for one month.

On behalf of Pilgrim Bandits Charity "We have been researching HBOT for some time now believing that the only provision was in the US. Unbeknown to us, the world leading authority was right here in the UK. HBOT Trust in Scotland. These two lads are the first recipients from the charity and if it goes as well as we hope then we will be funding others to attend too."

Pilgrim Bandits Charity cannot provide clinical details of the treatment or the expected outcomes for full details please visit the following website for full details.

http://www.hyperbaricoxygentherapy.org.uk
For additional media information please contact:
media@pilgrimbandits.org t. 01425 461600 m. 07767 784295



RedWolf Airsoft Announce AIRSOFT SHOWCASE 2015!

Location: The Mall, Garrard Street, Reading RG1 1NR Date: Sunday, 17th May 2015
Time: 9am - 5pm

This show is all about bringing us together and promoting Airsoft together; by combining our experience and passion for the hobby, will strengthen our recognition in the fast growing airsoft industry.

Airsoft Retailers - Will be showcasing their new shiny toys along with products on special offers for the event.

Site Operators - Will be promoting their qualities and specialties in their individual game site.

Airsoft Players - If you are looking for a bargain, then look no further, there will be a dedicated shop with players selling their pre-owned kits.

On top of the Showcase, there is a brand new walk-on game literally next door to The Mall. Now, how's that for an Airsoft day out??

The Mall: 'Annex'

'Annex' is a new site situated right next door to the award winning Zed Adventures 'The Mall' in Reading and is run by the same team.

This is a CQB site that consists of a very large 5-level office block with multiple stairwells and an extremely varied layout. We'll be running games through the entire day of the Showcase and players are welcome to book time slots of an hour in which to play. Walk-on slots will be available through the entire day but will be limited to ensure good game balance. These slots will be on a first come, first served basis so players may have to queue for a period to get a slot at busy times. The price per player is £10 for a one hour slot.

More information and booking system will be live nearer the time of the event. www.zedadventures.co.uk

Book now on-line for your special deal on the advanced entrance tickets and if you spend over £100 with a retailer then your entrance fee will be deducted from that transaction. (*Each entrance ticket = one single transaction only = FREE entrance fee*). Once you have booked your tickets, you must print out as your proof of purchase to entitle your special deal.

8 - 14 years old £5 Advanced tickets (£7 on the door)
15 years old - Adult £8 Advanced tickets (£10 on the door)

Companies confirmed so far:-

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Army Surplus & Toys
Ashleigh Wright Photography
Badger Tac
Badger Tac Two
Dave?s Custom Airsoft
Drone Airsoft
H.T.I.S (H T Immersive Simulations)
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For more information and to book your tickets, visit: www.uk.redwolfairsoft.com

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ASG TAC RIFLES

ActionSportGames is pleased to announce the launch their new TAC range of rifles.

The TAC rifle is a light weight, CO2 powered rifle with an ergonomic pistol grip that holds the BBís in a stick type magazine allowing a fast reload

The rifles feature a full-length picatinny styled top rail for optics and accessories.

The lower part of the rifle has a long rail for attaching the included fully adjustable folding bipod, and can be used for other equipment like tactical lights.

Furthermore the rifle features an integrated mounting bay for a laser aiming module especially designed for this rifle. The thumbhole stock has a built in rubber pad for added comfort when shouldering the rifle. Included is also a pair of removable fixed sights with an illuminated fiber optic front bead.

Using CO2 means more power and a high fire rate, making this an exciting and fun gun to shoot.

Ergonomic grip with finger grooves for shooter comfort
Full length metal top rail for optics and accessories
Bottom rail for attachment of bipod, lights, or lasers
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Non-blowback design for increased CO2 efficiency

Available now from your local ASG Stockist.

TASKFORCEX

What started off as a crowdfunding on Indiegogo became an instant success after the introduction of the product.

Three Americans with different backgrounds wanted to create a 21st century plus versatile and durable mag pouch.

A mag pouch that can withstand the hard beating circumstances of an Operator and be as versatile as the common nylon mag pouch.

TaskForceX is proud to announce that it will exclusively distribute the Limitless Gear OPFOR MC-R mag pouch for the European market.

The OPFOR MC-R is made of a polymer material that can withstand the freezing cold and won't get a sunburn. You can even spray paint it.

The MC-R can be used for almost any NATO 5.56 magazine on the ARI 5/M4 platform, including P-Mags and Hexmags.

You can stack them onto each other, or stagger them.

Wear them upright or inverted, it doesn't matter how you wear them, they are ambidextrous.

And don't worry, you won't be spending ages changing your mag pouches from carrier to carrier or have bag full of mag pouches. Simple and easy, that is how you swap the MC-R from your plate carrier or chest rig to your gear belt or the other way around.

The OPFOR MC-R is available in the color Coyote Tan and the colors Black and OD will be introduced later this year.

Limitless Gear is also developing a duty belt adapter, so in future it can be used on a standard tactical belt up to 2" wide.

For more information on the OPFOR MC-R, please contact us at sales@taskforcex.ie or +353. 86.210.5603.

http://www.taskforcex.ie/limitless-gear-opfor-mc-r-mag-pouch.html

NEW ONLINE AIRSOFT RETAILER!

Bomb Up Airsoft are delighted to announce that their online store is now live.

They are based in Runcorn, Northwest and offer free shipping on orders over £50, collection is also available.

Matt Allen, Director of Bomb Up Airsoft says, "As a keen airsofter myself I found it quite frustrating that although we have the skirmish sites in the Northwest, the retail side of Airsoft is quite limited. We decided to start this business as Airsoft retailers as this is not just a job to us but a passion."

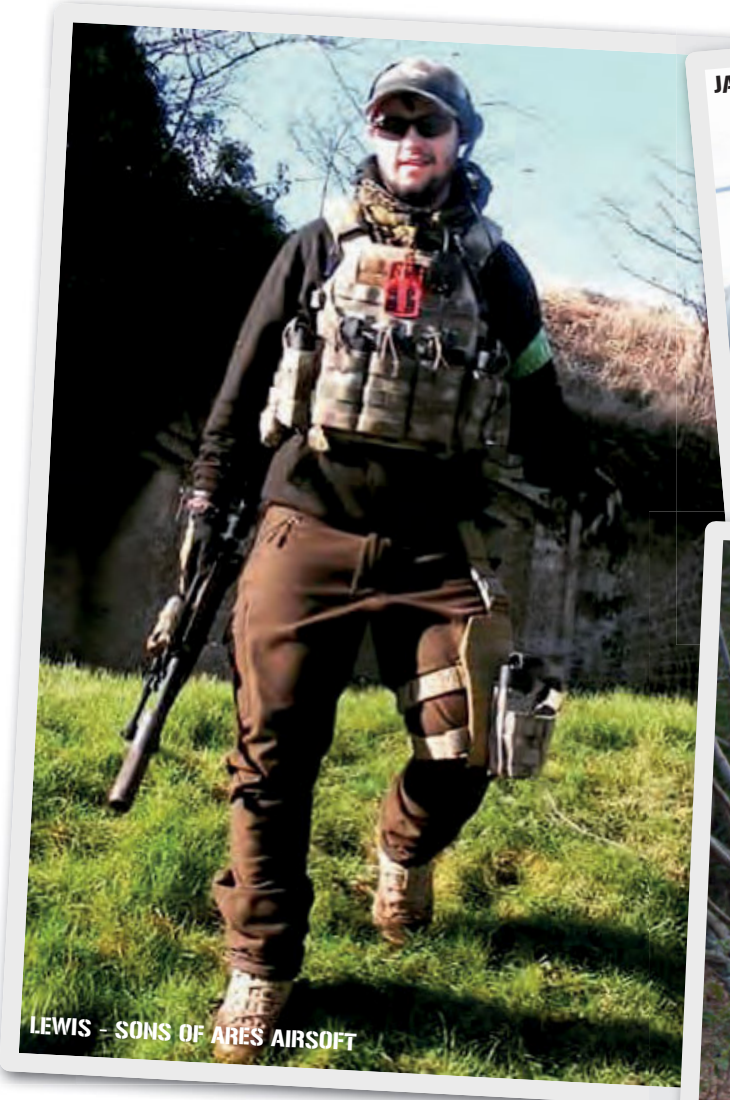
Bomb Up Airsoft aim to open a physical store in the future and currently make it possible for customers to collect orders from them. They regularly share new discount codes and special offers. Check out the online store now for great gear at great prices - bombupairsoft.co.uk






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JAMIE AT DRONE AIRSOFT

INFORMATION

Fancy seeing yourself in Airsoft Action? Send in your photos via email (nige@airsoft-action.co.uk) or share on our Facebook page (/AirsoftAction), plus a few words describing what's going on in the image.



G3 COMPETITION WINNER CHRIS ST. GEORGE WITH HIS PRIZE



BY NAT





TOKYO MARUI UNLEASH A BIG HITTER

TOKYO MARUI HAVE ONCE AGAIN RELEASED AN UNOFFICIAL H&K PRODUCT, IN THE SHAPE OF THE 417 – BUT IS IT WORTH THE EXCITEMENT? OVER TO SCOTT ALLAN TO FIND OUT…

TOKYO MARUI, SHOCKINGLY ENOUGH, ARE NOT in China - nor is any of their production! Marui are based in Japan and that has higher costs of living, much like the Western world. Wages (and therefore goods) are more expensive but generally better too.

TM boast they have 80% of the Airsoft market share in Japan and, to be honest, that wouldn't surprise me in the slightest. They make by far the most reliable best all round performing Airsoft rifles on the planet today. There have been a handful of companies who have come close to their quality testing, such as Real Sword and PTS but TM is much older, bigger and more consistent than either of those organisations. You'd think they had invented Airsoft as we know it….

Oh wait, they did!

So if they are so good, why is there any competition?

Well Tokyo Marui care little about the market outside of Japan for some reason. That (and Japanese law) means they do not have to recognise trademarks in other countries. So all these H&K, Colts and Glocks that Tokyo Marui release are not licensed versions - which is a great shame. Is any of this likely to change? Possibly in the future but in the meantime, the dribs and drabs of TM goods will trickle out of Japan around the world to whet our taste buds. Which is great because players do love TM gear, irrespective of it being lower powered.



The HK417 "Early Variant" is, internally at least, the same as the TM 416D that has been out for a little while now. Utilising their recoil shock system, it offers stop on empty features much like a Systema PTW. The Marui rifle achieves this mechanically (instead of the electronic Systema cut off), which is better and more reliable in my opinion. The "Early Variant" part is not entirely clear but seems to suggest an early configuration and the 16" barrel plus 13" rail system may be to what it refers to. There is certainly more rail than on the VFC version, which explains the extra weight.

THE REAL STEEL

The HK 417 is effectively a 7.62mm SR25/AR10 design. It is Heckler and Koch's interpretation to tap into the huge military and civilian market and they've done it very well.

Utilizing the NATO 7.62mm round, it is an excellent performer and this may be why it ended up as a Special Forces rifle. While nothing in the 417 was desperately new in design, one of the key features was the gas system. Instead of using the fouled propellant gasses to cycle the weapon, H&K opted for a piston at the front sight post that performs the same job. Less fouling in the mechanism translates into a more reliable system. The drawback with these rifles is the colossal size and weight of them but this, coupled with a more accurate barrel, means you can hit out effectively to 700 metres. Everything about them is bulky but they are there for the purpose of extra range and stopping power.



THE DRAWBACK WITH THESE RIFLES IS THE COLOSSAL SIZE AND WEIGHT OF THEM BUT THIS, COUPLED WITH A MORE ACCURATE BARREL, MEANS YOU CAN HIT OUT EFFECTIVELY TO 700 METRES. EVERYTHING ABOUT THEM IS BULKY BUT THEY ARE THERE FOR THE PURPOSE OF EXTRA RANGE AND STOPPING POWER.

THE AIRSOFT VERSION

The TM HK417 comes typically well presented, as one would expect from Marui – even with a blue ribbon around the box. The most up to date versions of the "real steel" 417 are a very similar finish of black, this was seen by myself first hand at SHOT Show, so the Marui colours are not only close, they are exactly the same! I did manage to spend a good hour on the H&K stand at the show and the TM is pretty faithful to the real version in almost every external way - and that is quite reassuring for the price.

The markings are nice and clear and while they are unfortunately not official trademarks, they are there. Some people complain they are not totally accurate but then Airsoft is never 100%, so personally I can live with any slight inaccuracies that would outrage others. The rifle at 4.5 kilos is heavy, considering the internals are no different from the 416 at all and this is something to consider.

PERFORMANCE

At the heart of this rifle is Marui's Version 2 Recoil Shock Gearbox and that is an absolutely brilliant bit of kit. While the new PTS ERG does provide more recoil the Marui is not to be sniffed at. With their propitiatory quick-change battery system and the ever-reliable hop system, these rifles should run almost indefinitely if left alone. Players should easily expect to hit out to 50 metres maximum with the hop set and the accuracy of a TM is always very good. Again the recoil system is identical to the 416 system so unfortunately there is no bigger 7.62mm kick!

SUMMARY OF FEATURES

So it is not going to split any trees at 310fps and given that this is a 7.62mm rifle, it is a little low but then again that should not really affect your range. The efficiency and quality of the hop up unit is equally important to the power of the rifle. So many times I have seen a poor 450 fps sniper rifle shoot nearly as far as a 350fps rifle with a good hop set up. Its 800 grams heavier than the standard 416, that isn't a massive gain but something to consider for smaller players. The fast change battery is equally loved and hated. Few players like a proprietary battery system but the TM version is good and if you really want to change it over, it is not an overly technical task and one that any decent Airsoft technician should be able to manage easily enough.





THE GEARBOX IS ENTIRELY BESPOKE, AS ARE THE GEARS AND PISTON SO THOSE WHO LIKE TO TINKER AROUND MAY WISH CAREFULLY CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS BEFORE PULLING IT APART.

The hop unit is styled much like the G36 design and has a noticeable click as it moves, which is a great feature. The outer barrel appears to be bespoke so in the unlikely event you want to change it, you might see some trouble there. The gearbox is entirely bespoke, as are the gears and piston so those who like to tinker around may wish carefully consider your options before pulling it apart. All the parts internally are of a high quality and shouldn't present any real problems. The bushings are 6mm nylon types that are a strange thing to see these days but again, there is nothing wrong with this, it is just that more companies are opting for 8mm bearings.

So why should you care about this rifle?

The realism is the main factor in this rifle. It does everything a Systema PTW does with added recoil and it's less than half the price. You put the magazine into the rifle and begin your patrol. Upon contact with the enemy you fire your magazine off in short controlled bursts, relishing in all 70 rounds recoiling into your shoulder until "clunk", the 417 stops… You drop the magazine to realise you're empty. Quickly grabbing a fresh magazine you launch it into the magazine well and hit the mechanical bolt release. "Thud!" back in the fight and ready to go. I have to say the magazine design is better than the VFC/Umarex version as you can fill the TM version much more easily.

You should never feel outmatched or outgunned with the 417 at 310fps. There may be faster rifles out there, as well as more powerful but this is a really, really nice rifle. The satisfaction of the game is key to your enjoyment as a player and I truly believe that systems like the Tokyo Marui are the future of Airsoft. Recoil blowback, realistic action and operation with stop on empty systems are reaching the pinnacle of what Airsoft is meant to be.

USE ON THE GAME FIELD

Every M4 should be easy enough for your average player to use. The stop on empty feature does mean you have to use the specific Tokyo Marui magazine with the 417, which is a slight pain as the magazines are slightly more expensive than standard, third party M4 mags. That said, they are also higher quality than most other manufacturer's magazines too. The 4.5 kilos is around 700 grams more than the VFC 417 which, by the time to add a red dot and battery, you are going to look at 5 kilos easily. So if you like to be up the front or play CQB, you'll have Rambo arms in no time. The quick change batteries are great but you are likely to need two for a game day and at around £35 a pop, it does suck a bit when you could have nearly three regular LiPos for that money. As well as that the batteries aren't really pouch friendly, unlike a standard battery.

CONCLUSION

With a hefty £600 price tag the 417 can be a bit hard to swallow but when you weigh up the features and realism, it starts to make sense. If you want a 417 you only have two choices, the VFC is nice but longer term maybe not as good internally, although it is over £100 cheaper. If realism is your bag and you want something reliable then you can never go wrong with Tokyo Marui. It is a great bit of design and engineering and the 417 is half the cost of a PTW. It will boil down to the individual player and how far they are willing to stretch their wallet - and their muscles.

FEATURES

- POWER: 310FPS WITH BLASTER 0.20G BB
- WEIGHT: 4.5 KILOS
- LENGTH: 925 – 1000MM
- RECOIL BLOW BACK
- AMBIDEXTROUS FIRE SELECTOR
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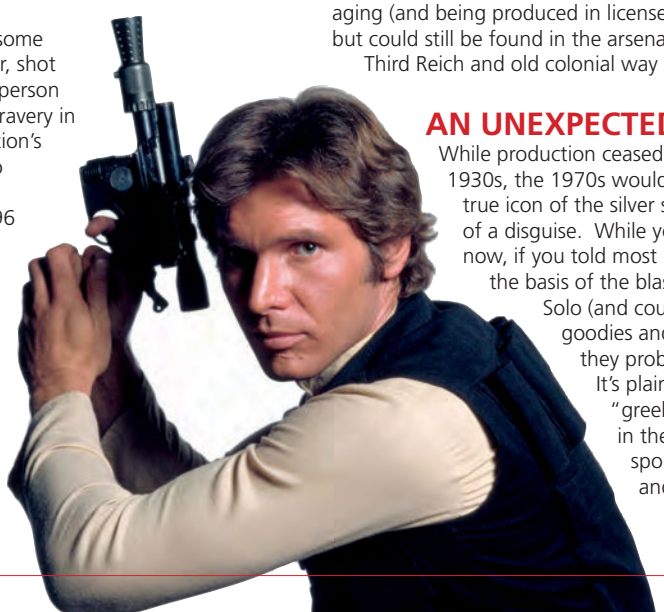
GADGE TAKES A LOOK AT THE AIRSOFT VERSION OF A TRULY ICONIC PISTOL, THE MAUSER C96

THERE ARE MANY ICONIC GUNS in world history, some of them are almost household names; Glock, AK, Armalite, Smith and Wesson… The list goes on and while most of these soon found their way from folklore to airsoft store after being centrepiece of numerous computer games, TV shows and movies one "classic" gun reached the airsoft world *without* mainstream fame. A pistol that for over a century has been one of the firearms that can truly be considered a world "classic".

Without realising it, you've probably seen one of these in some of the biggest sci-fi movies ever, shot one in a ground-breaking first person shooter, or heard tall tales of bravery in the Boer War as one of the nation's heros used this very weapon to defend the British Empire. Yep, believe it or not the Mauser C96 "Broomhandle" automatic pistol has been all these things and more.

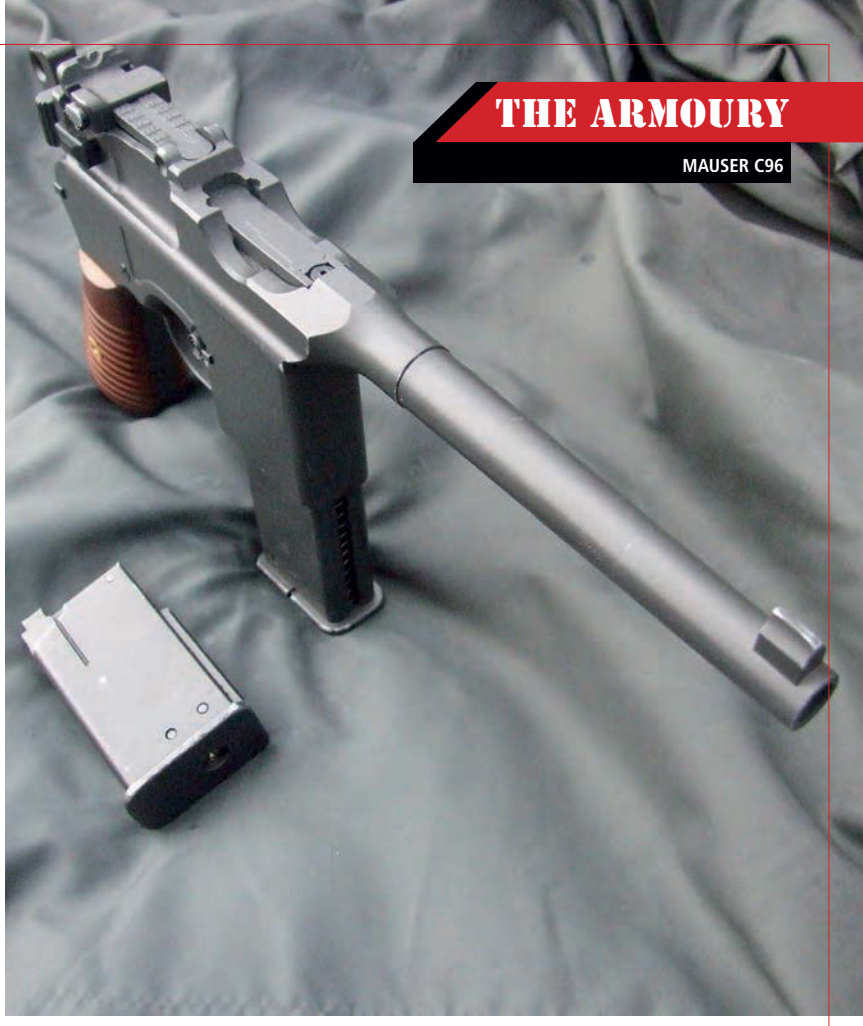
Designed in the late 19th Century the C96 truly is a classic, managing to maintain its status as a popular firearm for over 100 years. While few major armies ever took it on as a "service weapon" and incorporated it into their armouries, from the very start this compact but devastating automatic pistol was a popular "private purchase" for gentlemen requiring a reliable means of self-defence.

In fact, as we've already mentioned, Winston Churchill was renowned for wielding a C96 in his Boer War exploits but it would be the Great War that would see this German design in service with German officers and later, more widespread use in the Spanish and Chinese civil wars. By WWII the weapon was aging (and being produced in licensed factories worldwide) but could still be found in the arsenals of rear area units of the Third Reich and old colonial way stations of the Empire.



AN UNEXPECTED SCI-FI CLASSIC!

While production ceased on the whole in the late 1930s, the 1970s would see this pistol become a true icon of the silver screen – but in something of a disguise. While you're bound to see it now, if you told most people that this gun was the basis of the blaster pistol used by Han Solo (and countless other space faring goodies and baddies in "Star Wars") they probably wouldn't believe you. It's plain to see that with a few "greeblies" (as they are known in the trade) stuck on the side, sporting a telescopic sight and new flared barrel, the



C96 was seen by millions as the DL44 heavy blaster pistol (and also the MerrSonn 6 pistol)! More recently a new generation got to grips with the "box cannon" (as the C96 was known in Chinese service) as the 10mm "Chinese Pistol" in the popular "Fallout" series of post-apocalyptic adventure games.

So we've established it's a long running legend, just how well does the airsoft version fare?

Well I'll be honest here and tell you that I'm not a fan of gas guns. I like consistency in my airsoft guns and the randomness of British weather tends to make gas guns a liability for about half of the year; over the years this has made me an AEP and micro AEG man. But on occasion when I've really needed a type of pistol and they only make it in gas I've "bitten the bullet" (no pun intended) and purchased one, so I'm no stranger to them either. From Glocks to Smith and Wesson revolvers… I've had a few gas pistols.

Out of the box (and it's a quite pleasingly illustrated and well-padded box) the C96 simply feels LOVELY. It's got beautiful weight and balance (well it's a little front heavy, and well… heavy in general, but I'm used to Webleys, S&Ws and other revolvers) and you'd be forgiven for thinking that you're holding a real firearm. With a solid metal body and beautiful wooden "broomhandle" pistol grip the C96 just melds into your hand and begs you to give it a go.

HEAVYWEIGHT HAND CANNON

While it looks and feels great there are one or two oddities in this offering from HFC. Firstly they have strangely chosen to make a weird sort of "composite" C96 from various "marks" over the weapon's long service history. While it makes sense to make one of the later types of C96 with a detachable magazine (the originals were loaded top down into an integral 10-round magazine), for some unbeknown reason there is a superfluous fire selector cast onto the side; it doesn't move - just makes you wish it did! This could be found on the real steels 1932 "schnellfeur" (German: quickfire) version but, oddly, with markings from the Brazilian selective fire version! While none of this matters to the airsoft skirmisher it does make it an odd choice and I can't help feel that sticking to one model type would have attracted more "purist" collectors – but then again it may also have endangered copyright issues.

The C96 comes boxed with a long 28-round magazine but a shorter magazine that fits flush with the mag well is available



"WITH A SOLID METAL BODY AND BEAUTIFUL WOODEN "BROOMHANDLE" PISTOL GRIP THE C96 JUST MELDS INTO YOUR HAND AND BEGS YOU TO GIVE IT A GO."







"WHILE THIS IS A "CLASSIC" IT'S NOT GOING TO GO WITH MANY LOADOUTS UNLESS YOU ROCK UP TO YOUR SITE DRESSED AT WINSTON CHURCHILL – OR A SPACE SMUGGLER!"

and a must-have for those wishing a more classic look (or in my case "for those later intending to butcher the gun to make a "Han Solo" blaster!) or intending to use a holster, both, however, are well made and charged up with green gas easily. After gassing up a few mags it was time to take it out onto the range to see how it handled.

Loading up a large mag first to get the feel of the pistol I decided to snap off a few shots of .20 Blaster ammunition through the woods. I was fully expecting to have to set the adjustable hop but was pleased to find the "factory setting" in my case was giving me decent shot coverage/range and grouping up to around 30 metres. Fps was consistently around the 320 mark, which wasn't too bad considering it was overcast February morning I'd chosen to test out the Broomhandle.

My colleague on the weekend's test commented that she felt the C96 to be a little "loud" but I personally felt it was no more of a report than you'd expect to hear from a comparable (if more conventional-looking) gas pistol.

Several mags were expended and performance was consistent and agreeable across the whole of the test. I found the magazines to be a little heavy but again, it's probably more to do with the fact that I'm not used to gas magazines (my usual gas firearm having an internal reservoir as it's an M10 revolver) and to the gas aficionado I'm sure they will present no problem at all.

So test firing was sound and overall at this point I was quite pleased with HFC's "box cannon", so are there any downsides?

Well I think the obvious thing to state is that while this is a "classic" it's not going to go with many loadouts unless you rock up to your site dressed at Winston Churchill – or a space smuggler! It's a very "marmite" design that you're either going to love or hate. It's also mechanically very simple, not only are the fire selector switches fake but it is non-blow back (as the real ones don't really have a slide to blow back), so those wanting that "handgun realism" might feel a bit disappointed! But while the real C96 shoots a short bolt backwards (just clearing the hammer) with each shot, this relatively low price pistol has no visible moving parts when fired other than the double action hammer and trigger.

So the pros? It's a reasonable price, at just under £100 from Airsoft World and its performance is above average if you are just hoping to use it as a skirmishing piece. But I can't help feel that its "classic" design is going to sell this gun to you, not its performance… It's the sort of pistol you'd either buy even if it was a heap of junk as you just love em… or the sort you wouldn't look twice at.

The cons are mainly cosmetic. For a start it's not going to fit into most holsters and you're probably going to have to track down a vintage holster or get one made (for the purists there is a wooden holster that doubles as a shoulder stock available – just like the real world model!). Again the design is something a lot of you will hate and for those into the "real steel feel" of gas pistol shooting, it's pretty uninspiring as a non-blow back.

On the whole though I really liked the C96, I think part of it might be something to do with my intention to turn it into a "Star Wars" hand gun but since handling it, I can't help this nagging feeling in the back of my head that I'd be desecrating a classic and I should leave it as it is. One thing's for sure though, it's worth the money Airsoft World are asking and it's going to hold its own at your local skirmish – and you'll certainly stand out among the Glock wielding masses!

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PISTOL PACKING PUNCH

AFTER A LONG WAIT, SCOTT ALLAN GETS HIS HANDS ON TOKYO MARUI'S M&P 9 V CUSTOM

TOKYO MARUI HAVE FINALLY UNLEASHED their brilliant M&P in a Dark Earth colour, dubbed the M&P 9 V Custom it definitely packs a punch – both in the enemy forces and your wallet!

Gas blow back pistols have always been a strong standing point for Tokyo Marui and that doesn't look like it will change any time soon. Their quality and performance can never be denied and it is rarely surpassed but should you spend the extra on the V Custom or stick with the black standard M&P?

Tokyo Marui is the original name in quality for airsoft products. The sport quite simply wouldn't be what it is today without their hard work and dedication to drag us out of the dark ages covered in mud and into the bright future of electric and gas powered BB wars we now live in. Sure, there are a few reasonably innovative designs out there but few will even match the ease that Tokyo Marui offered. They do not make any bad electric or gas products these days, so it all just comes down to if you can stomach their price tag and their lower power levels.

The *Military & Police 9 V Custom* is the latest pistol that Marui have released. After an initial tease a few years ago, a long wait and then after WE released their questionable M&P first, it seemed like it would never get here. As always, once it arrived it was highly sought after and worth the wait. Well for some people it was.

Smith and Wesson are one of the original big names in pistols, in fact they date all the way back to 1852. Other interesting things that happened that year include the publication of *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* and the car manufacturer *Studebaker* was founded. Not exactly an exciting year other than that.

They started work on the "Volcanic Rifle", which was pretty cool and then they became very famous for a variety of exquisitely well-made revolvers. That seemed to be the bread and butter and to some it felt like that may be all they would ever be known for. Then in 2005 the M&P was debuted - the name being an homage to their past representation in the Military and Police market. Obviously the airsoft version is a reflection of the 9mm version but the real types also come in .40 S&W, .357 SIG & 45 ACP. Really firearms companies do have to release their pistols in every calibre these days to suit the consumer or field needs. The personal calibre side of things does seem to be endlessly expanding these days, gone are the handful of calibres that everyone uses and now you have very specific ammunition for very specific jobs.

The airsoft version looks as near flawless as is possible, naturally this is what I have come to expect from the land of the rising sun Manufacturers. The attention to detail, the quality of the finish all looks astonishing. Even the fact that the top slide is not metal is nearly a shock because it looks like very metallic. Even once you get down to the "third level" detail you will appreciate the design work even more. Nicely finished S&W logos on the base plates (you get a spare tan base plate for when you buy an extra magazine) help finish everything off. The ambidextrous slide release and safety work well but sadly the magazine release is single sided for you lefty people. But it does mean you can safely dual wield for the most part. The tan frame and slide paint finish is quite different intentionally.



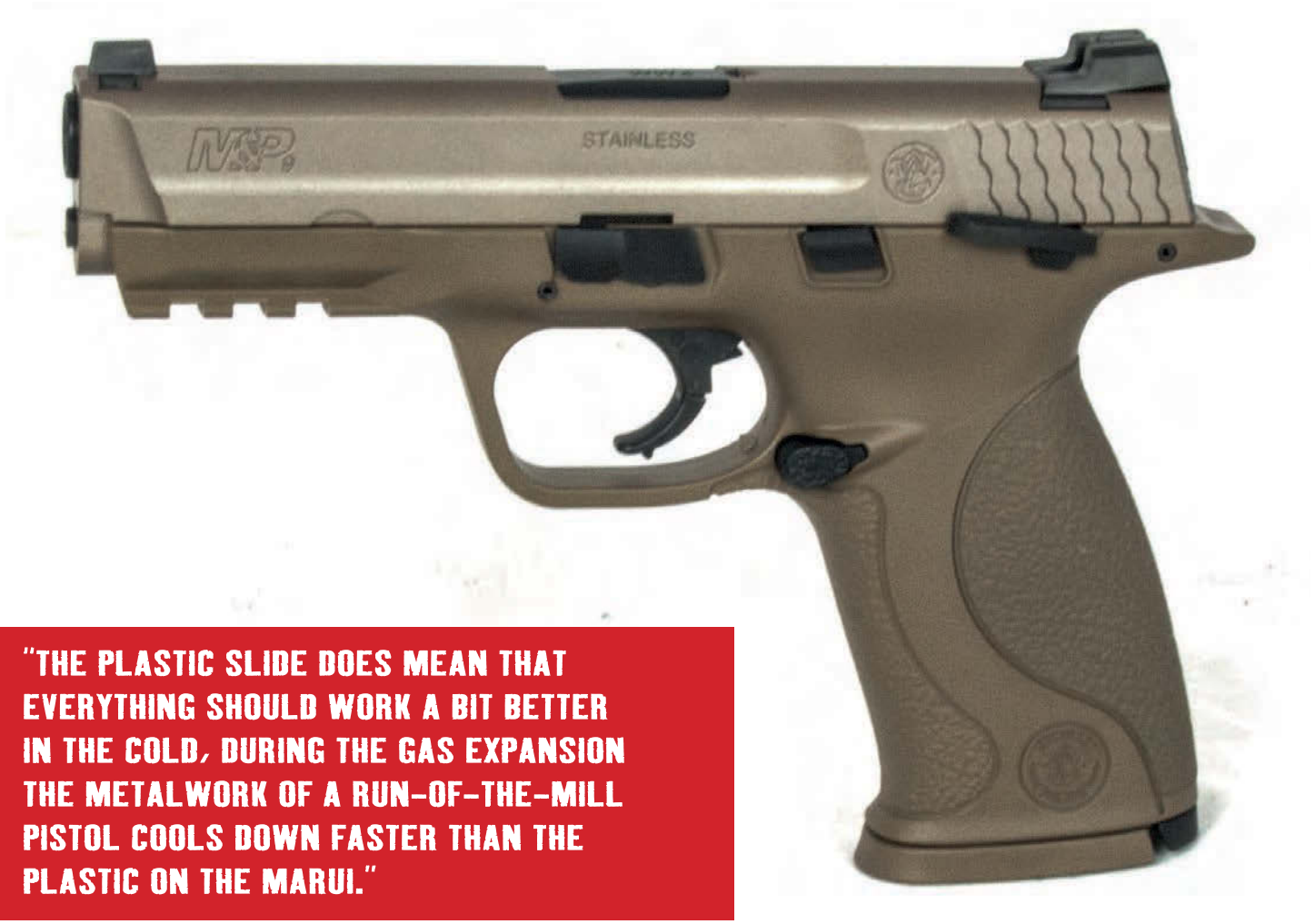
"THE ATTENTION TO DETAIL, THE QUALITY OF THE FINISH ALL LOOKS ASTONISHING. EVEN THE FACT THAT THE TOP SLIDE IS NOT METAL IS NEARLY A SHOCK BECAUSE IT LOOKS LIKE VERY METALLIC."



This is to mirror the polymer lower and metal slide on the real version. The V Tac replica sights are exclusive to this model and they are nicely done. The three sizes of palm grips included mean you should get a near perfect seating in your hand, no matter the size of your shovels.

Performance of a gas pistol is very much temperature-dependant and relies on good gas. If you use weak gas in winter then your pistol will fail you, use a powerful gas in the summer (a proper summer not an average UK one) then you risk blowing your pistol apart. Generally these days I can't see past NUPROL 2.0 or 3.0. These will always give you a steady and entirely useable 280fps approximately. Of course you could always start changing over valves and barrels to try and increase this. The plastic slide does mean that everything should work a bit better in the cold, during the gas expansion the metalwork of a run-of-the-mill pistol cools down faster than the plastic on the Marui. This means you should, in theory, have the pistol operating for longer… in theory.

It's a pretty nice list of parts and the look of it is even sweeter. Then the V Tac dual sights strike you. The top section sports a "fibre optic" day glow sight and the bottom is a glow-in-the-dark night sight, truly this is a pistol to rule the day and the night in equal amounts. People may be put off by the lack of metal slide but you shouldn't, the weight saving is a bonus in reality. It appears the same as metal to look at and that should be enough. A real slide is a solid piece of CNC steel generally and 99% of airsoft slides are cast that isn't very strong. All cast does is add



"THE PLASTIC SLIDE DOES MEAN THAT EVERYTHING SHOULD WORK A BIT BETTER IN THE COLD, DURING THE GAS EXPANSION THE METALWORK OF A RUN-OF-THE-MILL PISTOL COOLS DOWN FASTER THAN THE PLASTIC ON THE MARUI."

weight, which then lowers the performance of the piece. How many times have you been shot and wished you'd got the other guy? For me personally, it has happened a lot so I'd take reliable every time. The night sights are pale in colour during the day so they do not interfere with the day sights and vice versa for the night sights.

A side arm is always going to be just that, so you should only be calling on it in the direst of situations, so this should occur three times an hour if you are like me. There are those players who want to be running around with nothing more than a pistol and they have a great time. This is one of the pistols you could do this very job with. The M&P V Custom is lightweight, compact and most importantly, it performs. Yes, it is a massive bonus that I love the look of it, I am a tan fiend of the highest order and love it. Some people will hate the look, some will hate the plastic slide but if you are like me and enjoy the modern pistol then there are few finer examples than this.

Coupled with a Surefire X300 you would have to look at a Kydex holster for this to fit well, it is rumoured NUPROL are to bring out a version of their holster designed to take their clone X300 on a pistol. That will be a great day as good value holsters are few and far between. Solid retention holsters such as the Blackhawk Serpa, Fobus or NUPROL holsters are by far the best.

CONCLUSION

The only thing that makes me sad is the lack of compatibility with WE M&P gas magazines. Not for their standard magazines (which are lower quality than the TM version in my opinion) but for their CO2 magazines. Pistols that produce 300-330fps and run on CO2 are the way forward in every respect. You get more recoil, better stability in colder temperatures with the single draw back that they are a more irritating to fill and cost more to run. That is the key draw back for me as a player.

For looks the M&P wins hands down in every department, although the power is a little bit low for my liking personally. I'm not looking to maim anyone but with a pistol I do like an opposing player to feel they are hit when you're only going to get a couple of shots off. The lack of CO2 means that you will lose a little performance in the winter. As long as you are realistic with the abilities of gas you'll love this.

Oh and for God's sake, don't be one of those people who says "my pistol finishes every mag even in the snow"!

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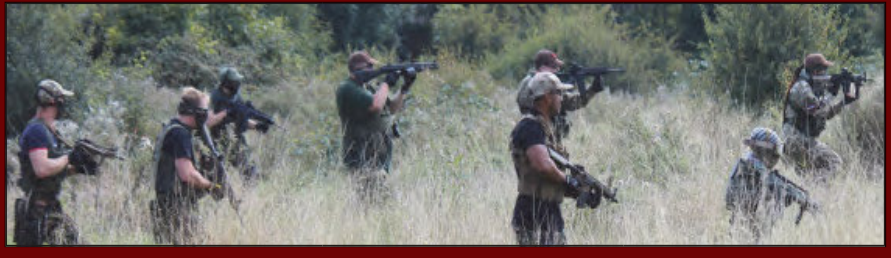
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THERE BE DRAGONS HERE

SET ON A HUGE MOD TRAINING GROUND IN SOUTH WALES, KRIS ROBERTS DISCOVERS THAT TEAMWORK IS THE ORDER OF THE DAY AT DRAGON VALLEY.

THERE WAS NO WAY THEY WERE GOING to get in. The defenders had dug in like ticks and they weren't willing to budge an inch. The fighting now seemed to be focused around a set of large double doors and the attackers were throwing everything they had at it. From where I was stood a procession of players filed past me with their hands in the air, heading back to regen as the freshly spawned quickly moved forward to take their place.

Wave after wave they attacked, chipping away at the defences far too slowly as the seconds ticked away. While the assaulters were being held at the doors, snipers took up positions on the opposite banks to fire over their heads and deep into the darkened recesses of the target building. The Marshal kept up a running commentary with the countdown. There was not enough time, they were not going to make it inside, let alone set off the charge that would win them the game.



And then the tide turned. A sudden and barely noticeable shift in the balance of power but it was enough for the attackers at the very front of the action to notice. The reaction was instantaneous and a tidal wave of fire poured onto the defenders. The attackers had the building surrounded and now they swarmed upon it like a colony of army ants. Within seconds they were inside, the sounds of firing and frantic fighting echoing across to where I stood on the bank outside.

Boom!

The Marshal called game over and out walked the attacking team, tired and battered, wearing the broad smile of the victorious.

THE LAND OF MY FATHERS

The early morning of Sunday 8th February brought with it some of the thickest fog I had seen in years and as such I arrived at the gates to Dragon Valley just seconds before the convoy of players was escorted onto the site. Being a MoD location we could not simply drive in by ourselves and the long line of cars ahead of me stretched far beyond my view in the silvery light of the thick, dense mist.

I quickly lost my bearings as we wove our way through the maze of roads. Visibility was little more than a hundred feet and all around dark shapes appeared from the gloom. Dead trees scratched the air like charcoal drawings; the remains of buildings lay shattered and broken like the bones and teeth of ancient monsters and the tall grass mounds that hid secret bunkers rose from the earth like swollen bellies. It was though I had entered another world, a post-apocalyptic Hobbiton. This desolate setting was the home of Dragon Valley, a fitting name if ever there was one.





"WHETHER YOU ARE A SNIPER, MACHINE GUNNER OR DOOR-KICKER YOU WILL AT SOME POINT BE NEEDED TO HELP YOUR TEAM GAIN THAT MUCH COVETED WIN. THE SHEER SIZE OF DRAGON VALLEY, WITH ITS VARYING TERRAIN, CRIES OUT FOR TEAM WORK."

A short while later I was walking through a brickwork tunnel that led to the safe zone. A huge concrete and brick building, surrounded on all sides by a massive earthen bank that provided an ideal safe environment. The place was jammed to the rafters with players and kit and it took me a while to find the man in charge, Jeff Shaw. As expected Jeff was busy with the morning's preparations, so after a brief "Hello" I left him in peace and decided to scout out the area.

Outside the players had already formed up to have their guns chrono'd. Following the queue into one of the site's many buildings I found a small team of Marshals working their way quickly through the line, checking each individual off against their name on the booking form. Back outside, all of the players using rental equipment were gathered by a second team of marshals and given a detailed explanation on the safe use of the eye protection and G36 rental guns. As the rental players were shown how to load and operate the guns, the marshals would walk among the group offering advice and helping those who got stuck.

I had been at the site for less than half an hour and already I was immensely impressed by the efficiency and professionalism of the staff. Everything was running smoothly and in next to no time all of the players had been gathered outside the safe zone for the official safety brief. It was then I could see the high number of Marshals on hand, gathered in force behind Jeff as he delivered the briefing.



Setting the tone with a detailed and entertaining delivery, Jeff separated the players into three groups (Regulars, Two visits or less, New and rentals) and then separated these into two large teams so that the skill set was balanced throughout. This would also provide those having their first taste of Airsoft a





chance to play alongside those who knew how to get the most from the game. A simple yet extremely effective idea.

ONWARDS TO BATTLE

Jeff then sent the players on their way to the first game. Following one of the teams into the mist it was impossible to get a sense of scale and when the game started I quickly lost sight of them as they sped off in search of the opposing team. The sound of firing quickly led me back to the action and I was able to get my first real look at the terrain available and the tactics used.

Dragon Valley is primarily flat, with sloping ground that twists and bends the landscape. Its key features are a multitude of huge earth banks, some with tunnels and pathways cut through them that provide plenty of cover for those looking to set up an ambush or flank the enemy unseen. There are also many different buildings of various shapes and sizes, along with alternating areas of thick brush, tall grass, wide open spaces and roadways.

What this means for the players is that everyone can find a role and that every role is needed. Whether you are a sniper, machine gunner or door-kicker you will at some point be needed to help your team gain that much coveted win. The sheer size of Dragon Valley, with its varying terrain, cries out for team work.

This being an open day with mixed players of differing skill levels I wasn't expecting much but from the very first game I was impressed by the willingness and effort that the players put into working together. Of course it didn't always work out as hoped but that is just part of the game and there is always something new to learn. However, throughout the day I witnessed fantastic levels of sportsmanship, teamwork and skill and it would be remiss of me if I didn't credit the players with the praise I felt they deserved.

BEHIND THE SCENES

I managed to have a chat with Jeff just before the lunchtime rush and he talked me through the workings of the site over a cup of coffee.

The team at Dragon Valley have been in operation for the last fifteen years. Originally located at a site near to Cardiff airport, they had been using the current venue at the Caerwent Training Area for the last decade. A quick tour of the safe zone revealed everything the players need and more. A multiple-battery charging station (which includes Lipo), a tuck shop, free tea and coffee (always a bonus) and a shop to buy all the ammo and pyro you could ever need. In the corner there was also an onsite repair shop, where most repairs can be done while you wait. Players are asked for a small fee for this service but, in a surprise twist that I found quite humbling, all of the money is donated to the Heath Park Hospital in Cardiff.

Jeff then showed me his collection of props. From fancy dress elements to working in-game pyrotechnics it was clear that the team didn't suffer from a lack of imagination. There were crates jam-packed with claymore mines and moscart firing LAW rocket launchers and RPG's. These are there to be used by the players when the game calls for it and I must confess that I was itching to get my hands on all of these wonderful toys.

"IF ONE TEAM IS DOMINATING THEN THEY WILL FIND THEIR OBJECTIVES BECOME HARDER AND HARDER AS THE DAY PROGRESSES. THIS IDEA MUST INVOLVE A LOT OF PLANNING AND FORESIGHT AND WAS PROOF AGAIN THAT THE TEAM ARE WILLING TO GO THAT EXTRA MILE AS STANDARD."







In a show of professionalism, Jeff then explained that his staff have been taught in the use of pyro by the specialist team at TLSFX and that every marshal has been first aid trained. A common sense decision when considering the safe enjoyment of your customers but one I have seen lacking far too often elsewhere.

THE LAWMEN

The players arrived back for lunch and Jeff had to scoot off to make some delicious hot dogs for the ravenous masses. This gave me a chance to have a chat with the head marshals, Ollie and Russ. They explained that active marshalling was a priority at Dragon Valley and that Jeff employs a minimum of one marshal for every twelve players. The team weren't idle either and from my own observations during the day the marshals were constantly monitoring the action, making themselves seen (and heard) and instinctively being drawn to where they were most needed.

That day saw well over one hundred players in attendance and usually with such numbers it is easy to find tempers flaring and misunderstandings taking place. I didn't see any of this and I have no doubt that a huge part of this is down to the number of staff that are on hand to deal with things instantly and I found that the whole environment was that much calmer because of it.

At the start of the day Ollie had handed me a sheet with all of the games planned for the day. This is given to every marshal and the game design is such that the outcome of one game will affect how the next one will be run. Ollie explained that the idea behind these multiple options is to help balance the wins throughout the day, meaning that if one team is dominating then they will find their objectives become harder and harder as the day progresses. This idea must involve a lot of planning and foresight and was proof again that the team are willing to go that extra mile as standard.

The games themselves are run with strict ammo limits and regen rules and although there are some who turn their noses up at such things at an open day event, I have to say that at a site like Dragon Valley it's an absolute necessity. The games would easily fall apart into static lifeless moments where both teams would throw thousands of rounds at each other at maximum range. This decision forces teamwork and consideration, it makes you value the lives that you have and encourages accuracy and choosing your shots. In short these rules make for better players and how anyone could find fault with that is beyond me.

My only regret with Dragon Valley is that I took so long in making my first visit. If you are looking for variety, structure, professionalism and a heavy dose of fun and action then get yourselves down to the valley. I'm already planning my return visit and I hope to see you there.

DRAGON VALLEY

Additional Site Information

Telephone: 07921 336360

Website: www.dragonvalley.co.uk

Green Fees – £25

Rental – £15 for Gun and Mask

FPS Limits:

AEG/Pistol – 350 fps

DMR – 450 fps (Minimum engagement distance applies/ not used indoors)

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Χαιρετίσματα από την Ελλάδα

(GREETINGS FROM GREECE)

KNOWN AS A HOLIDAY DESTINATION AND THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE OLYMPICS, GREECE IS ALSO A GREAT PLACE TO PLAY AIRSOFT.

I HAVE BEEN HONORED BY *AIRSOFT ACTION* magazine to drop a few words about airsoft in Greece. My name is George Tsinidis. I am an agriculturist and oenologist, with a big passion for this sport.

AIRSOFT IN GREECE

It's not clear when airsoft exactly started in Greece. From my knowledge and lots of conversations with other players, I would say that this sport started since early 2000. The first airsoft guns being sold in Greece were the classic Marui springers.

Although it is a great sport, high prices in airsoft gear and guns back then, with only two shops in the whole country, didn't allowed the growth of the sport madness until 2006 but from 2006 the sport became famous for lots of people. More shops opened in Greece, giving the opportunity of cheaper airsoft guns and gear, bigger variability and after-sales services.







"AIRSOFT GAMES QUALITY IN GREECE IS REALLY HIGH, WITH MOST OF THE PLAYERS CALLING THEIR HITS, PLAYING FAIRLY, RESPECTING THE FPS LIMITS AND ALWAYS TRYING NOT TO HURT OTHER PLAYERS."

Since then many airsoft teams have been created, as well as special groups in many areas of Greece.

The years between 2008 and 2011 were very interesting because of the player number growth but, as is logical, the economic crisis in Greece affected the number of players, with a significant number of players abandoning the sport. Another problem in Greece, like other countries too, is the problem with the legality of the sport.

As a European country, every Greek adult citizen is able to own an airsoft gun but the use of this gun outside of an official shooting range is not allowed. As a result, every single effort of some airsoft groups has not brought until now a clear Government answer. But the good news for many players, is the creation of private airsoft fields with legal license for airsoft games.

SEVEN YEARS IN AIRSOFT

Since 2008 I have participated in dozens of airsoft events through the Country. Greece is well known for the big Mediterranean forests, with the colors of green, brown and yellow come upon. Also there are lots of abandoned old buildings and factories etc. that we can exploit for CQB games. In the last three years, airsoft players around the Country managed to organize big National games with participation of over 300 players. Also very interesting were the night games, in dark woodland fields with the only source of light coming from the moon, creating very realistic game conditions. In our opinion, airsoft games quality in Greece is really high, with most of the players calling their hits, playing fairly, respecting the fps limits and always trying not to hurt other players. Off course bad behavior and cheating is a phenomenon that can't be completely eliminated but our team, in co-operation with other teams and players, always try to ban these bad players.



In 2012, after four and a half years of airsoft experience I decided to create a new airsoft team with four friends with similar to me experience in the sport. The G.R.O.M. (Greek Rangers Of Macedonia) airsoft team became reality in 2nd February of 2012.

G.R.O.M. AIRSOFT TEAM

The team has now 5 players (5th added just before one month, after a qualification of over one year).

Our members are:

1. George (operator – Assault / Sniper / Support roles)
2. Nick (co-operator of the team- Assault role)
3. Alexander (Sniper specialist)
4. Zafiris (Assault / Sniper / Support and armory manager)
5. Kostas (Support and armory manager assistant)

G.R.O.M. uses A-TACS FG uniforms, with TAN or OD vests of any type (molle or tactical vest, chest rigs, etc.), Black or Tan/OD boots and A-TACS FG boonie hats or caps, or helmets of many types depending of the game scenario needs. Communication in-game is able through PMR radios with headsets for each player, using military-based protocol. Our team has the biggest armory proportionally to the number of players, of over one hundred airsoft guns and specials replicas. Among of all, stands out the SW Barret M99, the SW Barret M82A1, the RPG-7, the MGL, the ICS GALIL ARM, the CA M249 SAW, the G&P M16A3/M203, the KRISS Vector, as also high end DMRs and custom AEGs and GBBs. Our team is able to use other uniform patterns like Greek Lizard, ACU, Marpat etc.


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AIRSOFT REVIEWS HD (AIRSOFT TECHMANIAC)

Airsoft Reviews HD, firstly known as Airsoft Techmaniac is the first professional-like effort of a Greek airsoft YouTube channel. The first pilot episode with a full review of four airsoft guns went live one 23 April 2013. Now, almost 2 years after the first upload, AirsoftReviewsHD has over 55 videos, with 365 subscribers and 55,000 views totally. It may look a very small channel, in comparison with other channels but don't forget that this channel is made in a Country with a very small number of players and with no help from sponsors. In the channel you will find, technical videos, airsoft guns presentations, unboxes and reviews, games footage from action cameras etc. We will keep trying making new videos for sure, as we got many positive messages from viewers from Greece and Europe.

GOALS AND IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE OF AIRSOFT IN GREECE

To be honest, the economic crisis combined with many problems created by the recent European terrorist attacks, affected significantly airsoft sport activities. These misunderstandings from people that have no information for this MilSim sport, with real illegal activities create a big barrier for the sports development, not only in Greece but in the whole of Europe. We try to spread out the word to everyone that this sport is not a crime. Our opinion is that a serious airsoft player, is a serious athlete. You must be a patient, courtly and serious character to join our games. That was the reason to separate from some groups of players, that we couldn't find the team spirit to make one more step for the common good of airsoft.



We are sure that we are going to make one more step for this sport by trying firstly to improve ourselves as individuals and then as a team with a common purpose. The creation of my YouTube channel is an important tool to spread the knowledge I got from my experience, lots of reading and discussions with other players and technicians from Greece or from other countries.

Me, my team and many other players from Greece, want to thank you for the opportunity you gave us in your magazine. We hope to help everyone by making a small step for the common good of the sport. We will be very happy to contact with players from all over the world!

George Tsinidis
G.R.O.M. Airsoft Team / Operator



CONTACT INFO

YOU WILL FIND US HERE:

YouTube channel:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXmUibeQge7zXtBluG6lQrA

Facebook:
https://www.facebook.com/george.techmaniac?fref=ts

Or you can email us on:
Airsoft.techmaniac@gmail.com

MIKE BAKER HAD AN M240B BUT WHAT HE REALLY WANTED WAS A GIMPY, SO HE BUILT HIS OWN!

L7A2 GPMG CUSTOM BUILD

PART ONE

A short while ago I received an email from Mike, containing some pictures of a project he was close to completing and I was so blown away but what he had achieved, I asked if he wouldn't mind sharing it with *Airsoft Action*. Happily he agreed and this is a record of how he turned his old M240B into one of the most well-known and much-loved General Purpose Machine Guns of all time, the "Gimpy". Over to Mike.

WELCOME TO MY BRITISH L7A2 GPMG CUSTOM BUILD.

I know for some of you it might be covering old ground and you may have seen some of this build on an old thread before, although please don't run away just yet. With this build now finished I decided it was time to sort it all out and have this build shown in a more refreshed and informative manner, by making it easier to view with all the progress put together.

Also, having researched so much during this project I'd thought it was time to share a piece of what I have learned and hopefully shed some light on how (and why) things are done on the real thing.

I would also like this to aid others in their builds and to hopefully shine a light (for those with a particular eye for detail) on the things that may normally be missed or overlooked.

So, let's begin…

This project saw me starting off with an Inokastu M240B which, at the time, I loved as it was. I started thinking about doing a British variant after hearing friends and family who serve(d) speaking very highly of the British GPMGs. However I was reluctant to do anything on it after the large amount of money I had spent on the thing, plus the upgrades.

So before doing anything, I decided to do a bit of light reading and I didn't realise (and was completely astonished at) just how much history surrounds the GPMG.

The first Fabrique Nationale (FN) MAG was designed in the early 50s by a guy called Ernest Vervier. It utilised the feed and trigger mechanism from the Maschinengewehr 42 (MG42) and the locking mechanism from the Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR). It was called the MAG 60.20 and was later renamed the MAG 58 – MAG meaning "Mitrailleuse d'Appui Général", which is Belgium for "General Purpose Machine Gun" and "58" is the year production commenced.

The 3 primary MAG variants were:

MAG 60.20 Infantry version

MAG 60.30 Fixed aircraft version with either left or right feed

Mag 60.40 Coaxial version

Its specifications were:

Calibre:7.62 x 51mm NATO
Action: Gas operated, Open bolt
Feed: NATO M13 ammunition belt or Non-disintegrating DM1
Weight: 10.9kg – 24lb
Length: 1,232mm – 48.5 inches
Rate of fire: 750 rounds per minute
Muzzle velocity: 838m/s - 2,749 ft/s
Range: 800m – 2,625ft (Light role) – 1800m – 5,905ft (Sustained fire role/tripod mounted)

The original British variant L7(A1) or (MAG 60-20 T3) was brought into service in 1957 by the Royal Small Arms Factory (RSAF) in Enfield under license by FN, which was then, after further improvements, upgraded to the L7(A2) or (MAG 60-20 T6) in 1962.

In 1984 the RSAF became Royal Ordnance Plc, until that was bought out by BAE Systems in 1988 and the original site was closed down soon after. When that closed it then fell to several sub-contractors (mainly Manroy Engineering) to oversee both the production of spare parts and general refurbishment of GPMGs till mid-2008.

In late 2008 Heckler & Koch were given the contract to produce all spare parts and accessories, having been given the task of producing new barrels since 2006. In 2011 Heckler & Koch won a three-year contract for a Mid-Life Improvement Program (MLI). During that time the original license by FN from 1958 expired and it was now "out of license" and so free to be produced by any arms company without breach of copyright.

From 2008/9 the tender for manufacturing went out to various companies, the main three being Heckler & Koch, Fabrique Nationale and Manroy Plc. As part of the tender they all had to submit several batches for testing, the most publicised and seen was the Heckler & Koch version.

Then finally, after years of testing both here and in the field, as of late last year (2014) it was announced that Heckler & Koch had won the contract to produce the L7s and it's spares for the next few years.

British armed forces don't just use the L7s, they have been using a number of variants of the GPMG with different designations for many years now.

Here they all are:

L7A1 - Base production model of the FN MAG 60.20 T3 machine gun.

L7A2 - Improved feed mechanism, lightweight stock (ABS) and provision for 50 round belt box.

L8A1 - Co-axial variant for mounting inside AFVs. SF butt stock, L9 Barrel fitted with fume extractor, Single position gas regulator, Solenoid operated trigger and with folding pistol grip.

L8A2 - Improved feed mechanism.

L19A1 - These were part of the L4 tripod kits not a complete weapon. Stellite lined barrels for heavy rates of fire.

L20A1 - Aircraft variant for remote firing in gun pods and external mountings.

L20A2 - Improved feed mechanism.

L37A1 - Vehicle mounted variant with L8A1 breech & L7 barrel. Conventional pistol grip and trigger, plus kit allowing dismounted use.

L37A2 - Improved feed mechanism.

L43A1 - Vehicle mounted variant used as a ranging gun on the Scorpion light tank

L44A1 - Royal Navy variant based on the L20A1

L44A2 - Improved mechanism

L112A2 - Variant for mounting on Lynx Helicopter

Here's a L7A2.....



The L7 GPMG was nicknamed the "Gimpy" (pronounced "Jimpy") or "The General" and has seen every British military engagement since entering service. To name a few: Aden, Borneo, Rhodesia, Northern Ireland, Oman, Falklands, Gulf War, Bosnia, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Iraq.

The MAG series has also been used by 80 other countries for roughly around the same length of time, although under different designations.

For example:

Austria - 7.62mm MG MAG/Pz,
Argentina - 7.62 ametralladora Tipo 20-60 MAG,
Brazil - M971,
Canada - C6,
Egypt - Helwan 920,
Indonesia - SPM2,
Republic of China - CQ 7.62x51,
Sweden - KSP 58,
Taiwan - Type 74

America did eventually jump on the band wagon but not till later on, having designed its own version of the MAG series. It was put into service in 1977 and was called the M240 and at the time was only used as a co-axial variant on armoured vehicles. It wasn't fully introduced as an infantry variant until 1991 by the US Marines, as the M240G and a replacement for the dated M60, then later used by the US army in 1995 as the M240B, although originally called the M240E4.

Like the British, several variants were to follow: M240C, M240D (E1), M240H (E5) and the latest being the M240L, which is the new lightweight variant being trialled.

Compared to the L7 the M240 infantry variant has only seen five engagements: Somalia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq (1991 and 2003).

So with all the history surrounding the British GPMG and the fact that it may possibly never be produced for airsoft, it inspired me to take a risk and go for it - and so the build commenced.

When I first got my M240 as the US Army version:



When I had it as the US Marine version M240G:



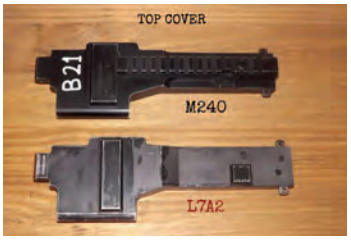
Like myself, most people don't realise how different the L7A2 is compared to the M240 but after researching and spending months studying plans, photos and parts lists, I was left with a list almost an A4 page long of parts and work that needed to be done.

At first I managed to pick up the usual bits floating around militaria shops or shows, like the 50-round belt tin, sling, top cover, stock etc. but then my trail went dead, as parts are usually scarce or just generally hard to get hold of. By sheer luck I was introduced to two guys in the know and then information about GPMG (and even parts themselves) came flying from all directions. Long story short, I ended up with all the parts necessary to complete the build.

So overall, the parts collected and fitted were:

* Inokatsu original style flash hider
* Front sight block
* Sling swivel
* Bipod with height adjuster
* Bipod retaining latch
* Gas block with gas regulator
* Top cover
* Top cover plunger
* Top retaining bolt and nut
* Carry handle assembly
* Barrel release catch
* Cocking lever and knob
* Feed tray
* Ejection port cover
* Trigger Group retaining pin
* Rear sight aperture and slide
* Trigger grips
* Safety catch
* C2 mount
* Stock
* 50rd belt tin
* Sling

As the build started to unfold I had to strip the whole thing down before I could start anything. So it seemed to make more sense to actually show you some of the major/minor differences between the L7 and the M240 parts, to help explain why I needed to change nearly all the parts.















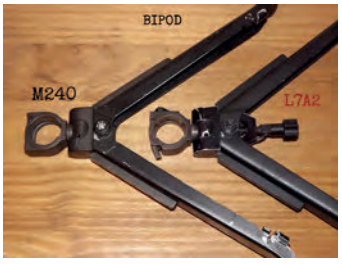




















A warning to those of you looking for parts; unfortunately some of the parts required are restricted by Section 5 firearms law. Those parts are the gas block, gas plug and flash hider. I was fortunate and got the Inokatsu's original type flash hider when I bought my M240. The gas block was a partially machined dummy for a display piece and the gas plug is a machined replica.

Now this is where the work begins and I started with the barrel and gas tube.

I had to remove the original gas block and front sight and also fill in the engraved NSN number (Nato Stock Number) and FN stamp on the top of the barrel. For this I used "Quiksteel" (that's how it's spelt) and is has held up OK for now.

So this is what the barrel looked like with the British gas block and front sight temporarily fitted.



Here is the before and after of the NSN.





Work to be done while away:

Lip on the barrel lathed down from where the old gas block was and locating holes drilled for both the front site and new gas block.

Next up is the gas tube.

I had to drill the 4 holes or "vent holes", two either side at the front of the gas tube using a 3.2mm drill (which is the regulation size). Then I had to make the gas tube fit and locate correctly to the body, then fit the correct pin. Unfortunately Inokatsu had made the correct recess but didn't drill the locating hole and instead of just drilling the hole and fitting the pin, for some unknown reason they decided to drill a hole underneath then use a roll pin to secure the two parts together.

Vent holes



Locating hole on body/gas tube after.





Roll pin hole underneath before and after:





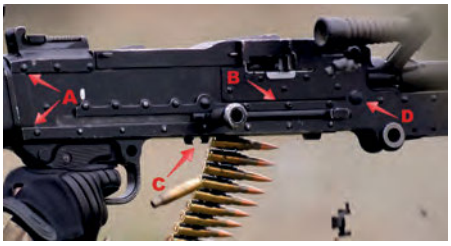
Work to be down while away:

Recess to be made on the right hand side of gas tube for the sling swivel to sit.

Work then started on the body.

The pictures below are sections of the body, with the comparisons as the work is done.

The first picture is of a real GPMG as an example of what needs altering



A. The gaps top and bottom are very small and have a gap of about 1mm.
B. The bar above the cocking lever is flush and level.
C. Two lugs that are cut away.
D. Two large rounded rivets.

With both A and B I used Quiksteel again and filled them the best I could.

With C, I cut away with a file then used the Quiksteel to strengthen what was left.

At this point D hasn't been changed and is still the large M240 rivets (these will be changed once sent away).

In some of the pictures the body has been sprayed black temporarily to see if they would look correct once painted.

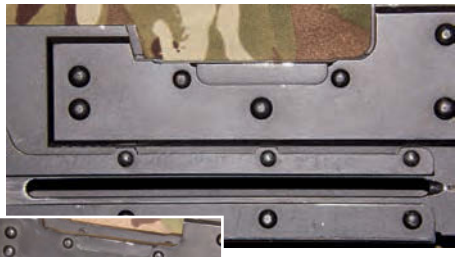
SECTION "A"







SECTION "B"

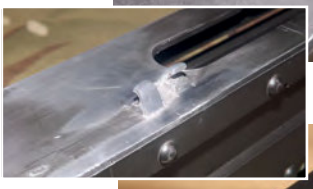






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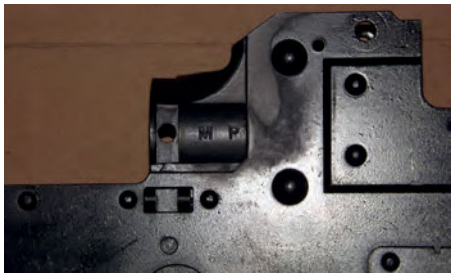


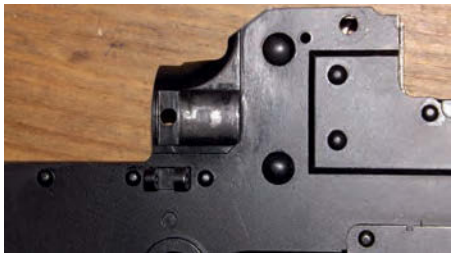




On the left hand side on an M240 where the barrel attaches, there are the letters M and P stamped on it. They had to be filled too.

Before and after.



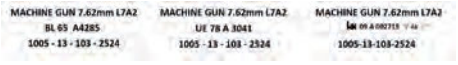


Next problem was the "Trades".

Hats off to Inokatsu for the level of detail they have gone to but it gave me a small headache when it came to getting the L7 trades done. They had actually roller-stamped the trades correctly, just like the real thing. So the first thing I had to do was sand the body down slightly to assess the depth stamped. Then I decided to just keep sanding till the body was completely rid of trades – only problem was that I had created a slight curvature in the body but when I took it to the engravers, they thought it was OK and were more than happy to go ahead engraving it.

Now, for a little explanation into how British GPMG markings work.

Here's what you will normally see:



The top row speaks for itself but the next row is the important bit.

The first two letters are the manufacturer; the first markings "BL" means Belgium Liège and is made by Fabrique Nationale (FN). "UE" was UK Enfield (Royal Small Arms Factory) and there was also a very small batch of "UB" which was UK Birmingham and more recently "HK" (Heckler & Koch) which, along with their test batches, will now be on all new GPMG.

The next two numbers mean the year of manufacture I.E 68 is 1968.

Years you will find:
BL 57 up to 73
UE 62 up to 88
HK 08 to 11

The "A" is a batch number and was just added to the sequential sequence to allow the 4 digit serial number to remain ie A0001 to A9999 then it would roll over to B0001 if the production for an individual year exceeded 9999 guns.

Then the four numbers are the last four digits of that weapon's serial number. With the new HK ones they have gone to 6 digits followed by three Proof Marks (I will explain the proof marks later on).

The bottom row of numbers is the NSN (Nato Stock Number) for that type weapon. The NSN is used to identify everything from manuals, grease, tools, parts and assemblies, to overall weapons and variants. For example, carry handle parts:

* Carry handle arm	1005-99-967-0456
* Grip	5340-13-103-2874
* Lever release	5340-13-010-0664
* Self locking nut	5310-13-010-0594
* Grooved head pin	5315-13-010-0608
* Compression spring	5360-13-100-3038

Yet the complete carry handle assembly is:

* C1/1005-13-103-2873

Complete weapons:

* L7A2 > C1/1005-13-103-2524
* L85A2 > C1/1005-99-250-9030
* L119A1 > C1/1005-21-920-6546

The only other mark you may see on a L7 is on a BL-marked receiver. It has "FN DESIGN" engraved onto the right hand side towards the rear, directly above the balancing mark.

For the serial number on mine, I have actually used my date of birth, so it reads UE 84 A 2912 (29/12/84) so it's unique to me and recognizable. With the year being 84, I had to use UE as that was the manufacturer at that time.

The pictures below are of the original M240 markings then how they looked once engraved.







This is the point at which I could go no further without help, so I got in contact with a friend who happens to be an engineer and knows a thing or two about GPMG. He was more than happy to help, so the bits were sent away to have what machining jobs needed done to it.

This left the following work to be done:

> lathe down excess on barrel left from M240 gas block

> Gas block and front sight having holes drill and locating pins fitted

> The two large rivets removed and genuine UK spec ones fitted

> The circular recess made on front right hand side of gas block for the sling mount

> The top cover plunger altered to fit into the body to hold the top cover

While the GPMG was away it was also getting completely grit blasted then planned to be painted with the real paint called Suncorite 259 once the work was completed.

Part Two of my build will be in the next issue of Airsoft Action, when we will see it all come together.

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PLAYERS CHOICE



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GETTING HIT IN THE BODY IS SURVIVABLE BUT A HEAD SHOT IS A REAL SHOW-STOPPER. GADGE HARVEY TAKES A LOOK AT HOW COLD WAR WARRIORS PROTECTED THIS VITAL PART OF THEIR ANATOMY.

PUT A LID ON IT!

POTS, LIDS, BONE DOMES… There is one thing despite their myriad nicknames you can be sure of; steel helmets have been cursed by soldiers for centuries, only to be later blessed when they saved the wearer's life!

Since the early days of organised warfare, steel helmets have been prolific and ancient examples have been found across the globe. Unlike many other parts of the body, the skull is hard to damage but if you can, a head wound is often fatal and the first warriors were quick to realise this.

Throughout the Cold War years nearly every nation adopted a form of hardened manganese steel head protection, (with basic through to complicated carrier/liner inner systems) and notably the last few years of the period began to see experiments with plastic and ballistic nylon lightweight helmets occurring, largely in the West among the NATO nations.

While metal head protection has been around almost as long as the ability to forge and shape metal itself has, the actual design of





steel helmets changed dramatically during WWII and the vast majority of Cold War Warriors would be seen up until the 90s using (essentially) WWII designs.

GREAT WAR ORIGINS – THE LEGACY OF WORLD WAR ONE

To see the true origins of the modern infantry helmet we have to look back to WWI. At the beginning of the 20th century, personal armour had fallen almost entirely out of fashion. Some cavalry wore ceremonial helmets and breastplates but the fighting man went to war in 1914 wearing a soft cap or at best, a leather helmet (like the classic German "pickelhaube" with its "comedic" spiked crown). Hideous casualties from artillery bursting overhead of static trenches and, to a lesser degree, injuries inflicted by snipers on anyone foolish enough to stick their head out of the parapet, caused the "top brass" of the belligerent powers to look into a way of eliminating the high explosive and shrapnel threat that was causing almost 75 per cent of casualties in some sectors.



The British and French (and their allied nations) opted for almost medieval designs in quite separate ways. The British "Brodie" MkI helmet with its "soup bowl" style was designed to protect a soldier from overhead missiles falling down into a trench with its wide brimmed shallow design, similarly troops poking their heads up for sneaky peak had a chance to deflect an oncoming bullet striking the smooth curved dome. While this sounds well thought out, the actual origins of this style of helmet design can be seen as early as the 14th century, although in medieval warfare the intention was for the helmet to protect against overhead blows swung down upon the wearer from hand weapons. The French went for an equally archaic design (reminiscent of Roman helmets) with their "Adrian" helmet and its re-enforced "comb" to deflect blows from the top of the skull (this style was also adopted by the Russians in very limited numbers in WW2) but it is with the technologically innovative Germans where we the finest theories were put into practice. In fact these early German designs are so good that helmets clearly inspired by the German "model 1916 stalhelm" can still be seen in service today.

"THE FIGHTING MAN WENT TO WAR IN 1914 WEARING A SOFT CAP OR AT BEST, A LEATHER HELMET (LIKE THE CLASSIC GERMAN "PICKELHAUBE" WITH ITS "COMEDIC" SPIKED CROWN)."

The Germans had opted for a well thought out and visually distinctive style that not only protected the skull from above but swooped down at the side and the back before flaring out, offering incredible protection to the sides of the face, ears and neck. In fact post-WWI studies ascertained that had the British adopted the German style, head injuries could be minimised by up to 50 per cent! It wasn't done, by the way, as it was seen to be "not British" to follow the German example – regardless of how many lives it may have saved!

DISTINCTIVE SILHOUETTE

In this possibly apocryphal anecdote, however, lies an important grain of truth. The steel helmet is a boon in terms of protection but also a curse when it has such a distinctive shape. The head and silhouette of the helmet is often the first thing a patrolling soldier sees of his enemy – so much so that soldiers since WWII have taken great pains to break up the outline of the "unnatural" helmet shape with scrim, netting and local foliage. During the 1970s the US even produced thousands of fake plastic Soviet "look alike" helmets to put over US helmet liners, to make the "opposing force" on exercise look like a "real enemy", which illustrates how important a shape of the helmet is to identifying friend from foe.

During WWII the allies were held back by each nation using its own distinct equipment with little or no standardisation. Moves to replace the UK helmet, found lacking outside a "trench warfare" environment, with the US "M1" model (vastly superior to the UK MkII of the time) were shelved when it was found that UK headphones would not fit under US helmets. Adopting the German or Russian model was out of the question and so the UK "compromised" with the MKIII or "turtle shell" assault helmet, which came into service in the last years of WWII and looked like the bastard child of a British MKII and a US MK1 helmet! This quickly introduced "interim" design would serve the British Army in various modified forms up until the mid-80s!

The rest of NATO, however, would adopt the US M1 steel helmet with a separate liner (usually consisting of compressed wood fibre or plastic) for decades, creating a degree of standardisation as West Germans, Americans, Belgians, Norwegians and many other nations adopted the US model under licence, often changing minor features like chinstraps and liners. The M1 helmet had many advantages over its competing British MKIII model, not least was the fact that the pull out liner allowed the soldier to use the helmet as a water carrying pot and, in emergencies, even cook in it (although this was discouraged as repeatedly heating the steel could weaken its protective qualities).

Across the Iron Curtain the Warsaw Pact (WP) was also standardising its soldier's head protection. During WWII the Russians had begun the war using the French "Adrian" helmet but soon created their own domestic entry into the world of bone domes and, in the process, created another world icon… The M40 steel helmet.

After a shaky start (the "machismo" of many Soviet soldiers made them feel that "helmets were for sissies" – regardless of casualty lists saying otherwise!) the Model 40 (which was startlingly



similar in profile to the US M1) became a standard, with minor variations, across the WP with the Russians, Czechs, Hungarians and the Poles (M50). The Bulgarians initially used an old WWII 1936 model -before "modernising" to a copy of the Italian M33 helmet in the 1970s, while Romania used an equally aging copy of the 1930s Dutch model. On the whole though, like NATO with its distinctive M1 design, the WP had an equally distinctive profile, with the M40 type being in use with most armies; making the two sides easily recognisable in profile. Even in the Eastern Bloc though, the true innovation, was happening in Germany!

VORSPRUNG DURCH TECHNIK!

Soon after its inception, the armed forces of the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR) adopted the M56 stalhelm, a distinctive and highly effective design. Allegedly the M56, so folklore holds, had been designed in the middle of WWII as a successor to the ageing M35 type "stalhelm" (the classic WWII "Nazi" helmet) but was disliked by Hitler and shelved, never to see "Third Reich" production. With a new communist party in power… well, anything Hitler hated had to be good and the plans were dusted off and the M56 put into production. The M56 once again demonstrated Hitler was utterly clueless and really excelled only at making poor decisions, as, to put it bluntly, the new helmet proved to be a world-beater and could have been a great boon to the Wehrmacht. Post-Cold War comparative tests found the M56 to be equal in protective power to modern ballistic nylon helmets and far superior to UK and US models of the same time period!



But the age of steel was drawing to an end. While reasonably protective against shrapnel and "sub velocity fragments" (that's bits of fencepost and house bricks thrown up by a blast to you and me), no steel helmet could stop modern rifle rounds. Despite the Warsaw pact adopting a modernised, more sharply angled helmet in the 70s (the M68) and NATO constantly improving the inner liners of their designs, the helmet was beginning to be a heavy encumberment. It's protective "pros" did not really compensate for the "cons" of weight and poor thermal insulation.

During the 1970s many armies had experimented with plastics helmets. The US had used plastics for helo crew helmets; the Polish, East Germans and British had made paratrooper helmets (although these lacked true ballistic protection) and motor cycle despatch rider helmets. In the west some AFV crew helmets were made of plastics, while in the East the Warsaw Pact continued to save money on padding the inside of AFVs by padding the driver with a cloth crash helmet instead!

All of this was to change with experiments in "ballistic nylon"; Kevlar and similar plastics resistant to sharp, high speed projectiles. By 1985 the UK's "MKV" steel helmet was hopelessly out of date and had been found lacking in the Falklands and Northern Ireland; as a result squaddies were only too happy to trade it in for the new lightweight MK6 plastic helmet. Comfier, lighter and superior in extremes of temperature but the UK was at this point following the US lead… who were really borrowing from, yes you've guessed it… the Germans!

FANTASTIC PLASTIC!

In the early 80s the US army, galvanised by horrific casualties in Vietnam, had taken "personal protection" as a "top priority" for the infantry soldier. Using revolutionary new fibres and fragment resistant nylons the Personal Armour System Ground Troops (PASGT) set was introduced and first saw combat usage in the 1983 invasion of Grenada.

As we've covered the vest element of PASGT in a previous issue, we'll conclude this month's article with a look at the helmet and see personal protection at the end of the 20th century go full circle.

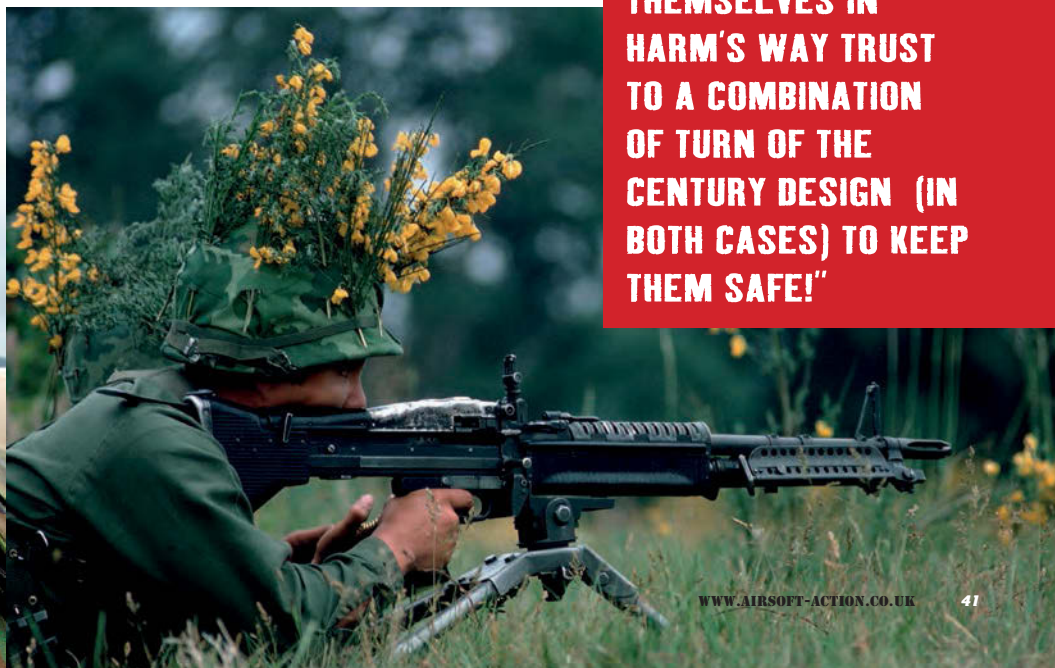
The PASGT helmet was dubbed the "Fritz" helmet by the men of the 82nd Airborne Division – and with good reason. One look at the PASGT and one can see the classic lines of the M1916 Stalhelm poking out! Forty years after the end of WWII, the shadow of Nazism was so faint that the World's second largest superpower could risk outfitting its troops with the silhouette of Hitler's storm troopers. But let's make no mistake, this was a sound choice for the US Army, as studies since the 1920s had shown the "coal scuttle" design to be one of the best possible options to keep the fighting man alive. Free of the associations of the evil acts done in WWII and given enough time to heal the memories of veterans, the PASGT could protect a new generation of GIs fighting for the Free World.

The legacy of the PASGT (or should we say the M1916) remains with us to this day. Across the world police forces, armies and other forces that put themselves in harm's way trust to a combination of turn of the century design (in both cases) to keep them safe!



"ACROSS THE WORLD POLICE FORCES, ARMIES AND OTHER FORCES THAT PUT THEMSELVES IN HARM'S WAY TRUST TO A COMBINATION OF TURN OF THE CENTURY DESIGN (IN BOTH CASES) TO KEEP THEM SAFE!"





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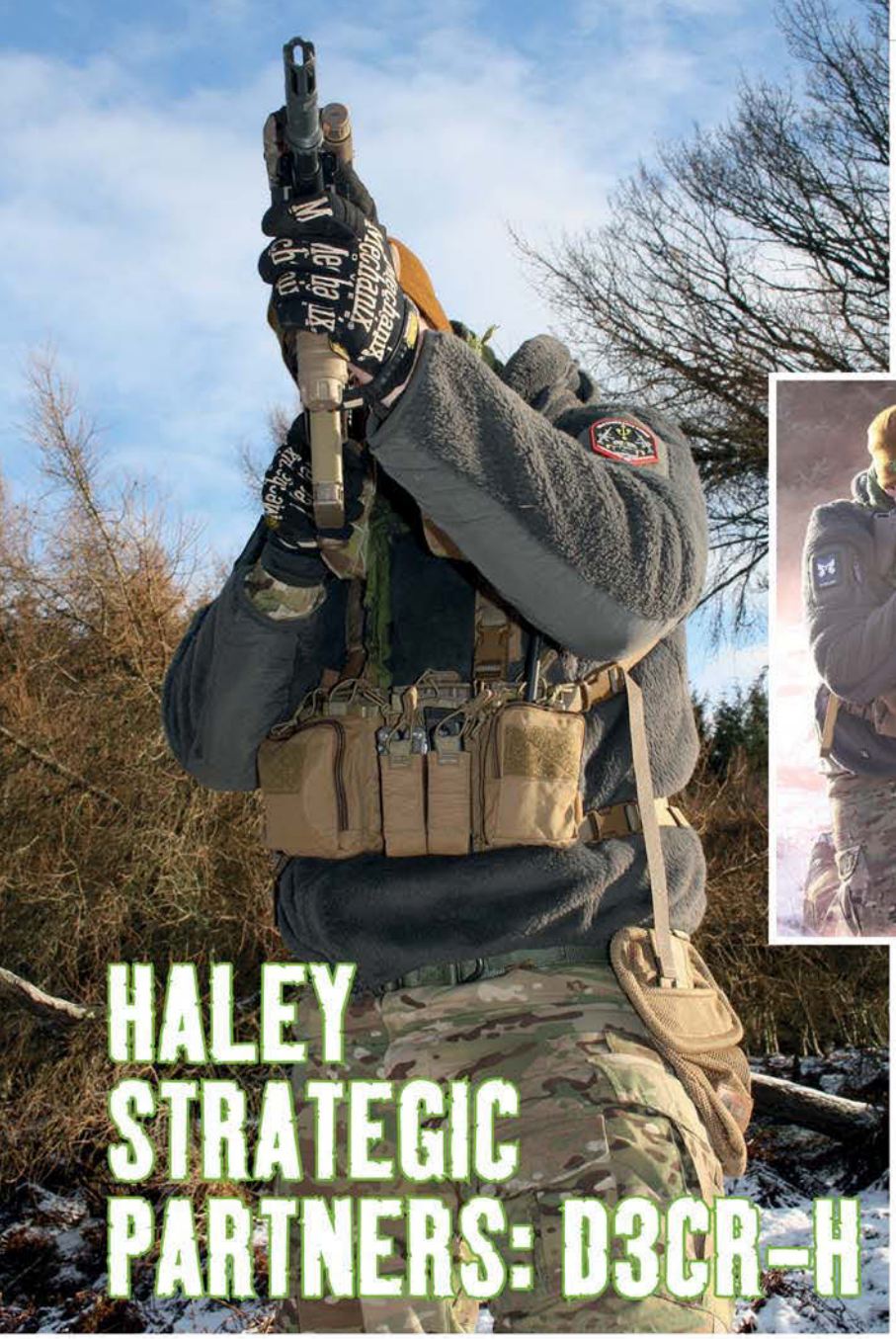
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HALEY STRATEGIC PARTNERS: D3CR-H

IN A DEPARTURE FROM HIS USUAL COLUMN, RICHARD BELL (AKA FIREBASEALPHA), BRINGS US AN EXCLUSIVE LOOK AT THIS HSP REAL-WORLD RIG.



AS ALWAYS WITH *AIRSOFT ACTION*, we try to bring you exclusive reviews – and this is no different. I would hope **Haley Strategic Partners** is name that many of you recognise by now? If not, then this should be a good introduction to one of their most recognised pieces of nylon.



What we have here is one of the first HSP D3CR-H chest rigs in the UK. The HSP (Haley Strategic Partners) D3 (Disruptive Environments) CR (Chest Rig) H (Heavy) is a fixed pouch, slim line chest rig designed to carry 7.62/.308 style magazines, as well as other pieces of kit the user would require.

The main features of this chest rig are:

x4 Magazine pouches; located at the rear and are sized to hold 7.62mm magazines covering a plethora of rifle platforms from SR25, SCAR, FAL and M14 etc.

x2 Pistol Pouches; that double up to carry Torches/Multi-tools. They also have a small magnet sewn into the back of the magazine pouch for extra retention.

x1 Small GP Pouch; located on the left hand with a sensible sized Velcro panel.

x1 Large GP Pouch; zipped and located on the Right hand side and again you have a sensible sized Velcro panel. Unlike the smaller pouch this has 2x2 elasticated retainers as well as a clear (no sealed) documents insert inside the pouch.

The H-Harness, which is the preferred harness of most chest rigs, is detachable via QR (quick release) side lock buckles and has a Velcro tab located on the back of harness.

The magazine pouches use a shock cord retention system with "Hypalon" pull tabs that provide both grip and texture in any conditions.

The D3CR-H can also be expanded to accommodate extra load with the addition of the Holster Wedge and Multi-Mission Hanger, which can be attached to a Velcro panel found on the back of the chest rig.



You will also notice x2 elasticated retainers found on the left and right hand side of the chest rig, ideal for cyalumes and Mk V etc.

The D3CR-H chest rig is incredibly versatile and very lightweight. It is compatible with a number of Plate carriers currently on the market and can be adapted to others using swift clips. Unlike its predecessor, it is only available in Coyote Brown or Multicam but that may change in the future.

This is an incredibly well designed chest rig, designed and manufactured in the USA, constructed out of 500D with top end hardware and with the Travis Haley stamp of approval.

Haley Strategic is distributed in the UK by Tactical Kit, who can be contacted via their website: www.tactical-kit.co.uk, or telephone: 01778 561672.

The HSP D3CH-R retails at around £170.



ARMORED CLAW TACTICAL GLOVES

JERRY NOONE TAKES A LONG LOOK AT THE NEW RANGE OF TACTICAL GLOVES FROM ARMORED CLAW AND IS VERY IMPRESSED BY WHAT HE SEES.

UNTIL A COUPLE OF MONTHS AGO I'd never come across the Armored Claw tactical glove brand and if the Editor of this here publication hadn't shoved them under my nose, I would have remained oblivious - which would actually have been a great shame!

Armored Claw gloves are being sold by Gunfire in Poland (www.gunfire.pl) who have been massively involved with bringing the brand to market. Armored Claw's predecessor is the GFC Tactical HDR (Heavy Duty Ready) gloves series. Gunfire decided to separate their new gloves from the GFC Tactical line as both the Armored Claw's target user and characteristics are somewhat different. First of all, the Claws are not being made in China and should not be associated with the stereotypical low quality level. Secondly Gunfire made the bold decision to use state of the art fabric technologies and materials such as Kevlar, Nomex, Dyneema, Shoeller Keprotec and Thinsulate to create very, very focused designs. Thirdly, they were intimately involved and engaged in the creation of a product right on from its design phase. And last but not least, the Claws are designed not only for airsofters but also for military and law enforcement; although the price (more on that later!) is certainly right for airsofters the quality of workmanship, the designs themselves and the fabrics themselves are of the very highest specification possible.

Gunfire have really pushed the envelope with this new range; they strive to constantly innovate in relation to the product itself and enrich the offer with models and elements which are either scarce or expensive. As an example, last year they introduced a model of tactical gloves with Thinsulate insulation for use in the winter months and others where the fingertips support the use of touch screens. Each model in the range has come about to meet specific end user requirements.

KEY MODELS

Now the range of styles and colours in the Armored Claw range is really quite extensive, so I've been lucky enough to have a selection of the key models to evaluate.

First up are the **Accuracy Gloves**. The Accuracy is all about precision and dexterity, even using tiny tools. Their cut and the materials used in production ensure light weight and maximum comfort, elasticity and protection. The outer layer of the gloves is produced of spandex and neoprene, materials known for both high levels of elasticity and durability when it comes to constant stretching. On the palm's inner side you'll find the best quality synthetic leather in a special pattern resembling a scrim net. This pattern makes the grip more certain and slipping is reduced to minimum. It is highly resistant to tearing although only one layer of fabric is used, coming back to the precision remit. Another neat solution to increasing comfort is a panel situated on the outer side of the thumb. It is made of material which absorbs humidity and is meant to sweep sweat from your forehead or your goggles/glasses. All the applied fabrics

have been chosen in such a way that they ensure maximum precision and ensure thermal comfort and breathability. On the ends of the thumb and a forefinger, on the outer side, there are non-slip panels so that you can work accurately with touch screens in smart phones, tablets and newer laptops. The elastic wrist closure is fully adjustable and velcro fastened.

These are no-nonsense "go to work" gloves and retail at just Euro14.57 a pair!

At Euro16.05 a pair come the **Covert Pro** gloves; the outer layer of the Covert Pro gloves is once again a combination of spandex and neoprene. On the palm's inner side you'll see again the best quality synthetic leather but this time beefed up with soft protectors filled with EVA foam which helps to increase both comfort and protection. A single layer of leather is applied on the fingers in order to ensure better grip and to ease more precise tasks and there are also small padded areas for knuckle protection on the top. On the ends of the thumb and a forefinger, on the outer side there are non-slip panels to again add dexterity when using touch screens. The wrist is also velcro-fastened, allowing full adjustment.

I have to say that I REALLY like the next model as this is a type of glove I've been looking for myself! The **Shooter Cold Weather** has a mixture of the features of both the Accuracy and the Covert Pro and then adds insulation. Spandex and neoprene check. Synthetic leather and soft protectors filled with EVA foam for palm protection, again check. In fact the Shooter Cold Weather is essentially a winter version of classic Shooter model. Filled with the genuine Thinsulate 3M® insulation, it's going to keep your hands warm during cold weather; yes, there is of course a little loss of dexterity but they're still precise enough to work with firearms/RIFs and smaller devices, like folding knifes and multitools.

Priced at Euro17.04 a pair these are a lot of glove for the money.

There are a few models between the Shooter Cold Weather and the next model, including the entry level **Shield Tactical** which is the first in the range to offer hard knuckle protection. That said, my next choice in the range is the **Smart Tac Glove** at Euro31.85; these are proving to be a fast (make that lightning quick!) seller for Gunfire so you need to jump on the right size when it's in stock.

Why do they sell fast?

Well, to put it simply the hard knuckle element is made of Schoeller Keprotec; this is one of the most abrasion resistant fabrics on the market today and it don't come cheap! A layer of Kevlar is then profiled to the hand which creates armour that perfectly absorbs all of the impacts made to and with the fist. It prevents painful abrasions and aids with impact absorption. DuPont Kevlar is the outer fabric, an aramid fibre which has got extraordinary capabilities. It's flame resistant; it does not conduct electricity and does not dissolve in organic solvents. Its major advantage is the extreme durability against cuts and abrasions. The gloves give protection against cut injuries which might result from inadvertent contact with a knife's blade, broken glass or other sharp edges. On the inner side, the Smart Tacs are covered with natural leather which provides a perfect grip. In the places which are especially prone to injury a double layer of leather is used. The touch screen technology is carried over into the Smart Tacs, and I have to say they're pretty darn good gloves.

Finally we've got a bit of a combat beast. The **Armored Claw Breacher** gloves are the longer version of Smart Tac. They benefit from all the fabulous fabrics and features that go into the Smart Tac but have a cuff of the same Kevlar backed fabric extending almost to the elbow. If you're going to be playing on FIBUA sites then a pair of these might be just the very thing to protect you from injury to the hand and lower arm. To me they'd be Euro36.79 very well spent!

SUMMING UP

As I stated right at the outset of this review I have the distinct feeling that if I hadn't stopped and had a really close look at the Armored Claw Tactical Glove range I would have missed out on something very good indeed! All the "Shooter" glove models are available in Black, Tan, Olive, and Urban Grey, with the more expensive models just in Black and Olive.



Construction of all the models is impeccable and the sizing appears spot on; I'm a standard Large in most gloves and the Armored Claw Large was absolutely spot on for me, with little or no excess fabric or bagginess. These gloves are simply yet attractively designed and I would certainly agree they have been put together with meticulous attention to detail.

And then there's the price. Given the first rate fabric technologies and materials that are used in the range, the quality of construction, and the precise fit I have to admit that I have utterly no idea how Gunfire have put these gloves together and hit the prices they have! These are superb value for money, especially given the exchange rate of the pound against the Euro right now. Factor in Gunfire's very reasonable shipping cost and the fact that you're not going to be hit with any import duty, then these gloves are just staggering value for money!

I'm meeting with the Gunfire Team at IWA this year to have a look at what else they have on offer and if their other gear is as good as the gloves, rest assured I'll be reporting back on things is due course. To conclude I think I'll be asking them to bring along a pair of the Shooter Cold Weather gloves for me to buy from them at the show!

For more product details on the entire Armored Claw range and to purchase please visit www.gunfire.pl

"GIVEN THE FIRST RATE FABRIC TECHNOLOGIES AND MATERIALS THAT ARE USED IN THE RANGE, THE QUALITY OF CONSTRUCTION, AND THE PRECISE FIT I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT I HAVE UTTERLY NO IDEA HOW GUNFIRE HAVE PUT THESE GLOVES TOGETHER AND HIT THE PRICES THEY HAVE!"

KLARUS FLASHLIGHTS AND PRESSURE SWITCH

JERRY NOONE TAKES A LOOK AT A BRAND OF TACLITE YOU MAY NOT BE FAMILIAR WITH BUT IF THE LATEST VERSIONS ARE ANYTHING TO GO BY, YOU SOON WILL BE.

I FIRST CAME ACROSS THE KLARUS brand of flashlights and tactical lights about three years ago and have had a couple of models from them in my gear locker ever since. My most regularly used flashlight, whether it has been for every day use in my pocket or rifle mounted for airsoft, is an original grey bodied KLARUS XT11; this wonderful taclite has given great service and is still going strong but I was excited to hear that it had been upgraded.

KLARUS may be a relatively new brand but the people behind the development and manufacture of these LED torches have been designing and making top end flashlights for years. They came together to share their knowledge and expertise in order to create some of the most exciting and innovative CREE LED torches in the world. KLARUS torches are innovative, precision machined illumination tools that are built to high standards and designed with both function and form in mind.

The latest version of the XT11 builds on all the great features of the original with improved performance and some great new twists. The XT11 Black Ops XM- L2 benefits from KLARUS'S dual button tail switch for complete one-handed control and it is superfast to switch between light level, momentary on and strobe functions. It uses a powerful CREE XM-L2 and an "orange peel" reflector to give a smooth beam profile up to a maximum output of a whopping 820 ANSI Lumens; that's 220 Lumens more than my Version1 XT11!

The light is finished now in a deep matt black and features a steel strike bezel that can be unscrewed and removed for attaching accessories such as coloured filters.

"LAST BUT NOT LEAST COMES ANOTHER INDUSTRY FIRST FROM KLARUS; THE TR10 MULTI OUTLET PRESSURE SWITCH. THIS ACCESSORY REPLACES THE DUAL BUTTON TAIL CAP WHICH IS FITTED AS STANDARD TO THE XT RANGE AND IS ABSOLUTELY SUPERB"



The new XT11 also comes with both a belt clip and a handy black webbing pouch. With simple, fast operation, a maximum beam distance of 180m and a runtime of up to 73 hours this is one powerful flashlight and is built to last; with an SRP of £74.95 this is really a bit of a steal.

But the good news doesn't end there! £84.95 will get you the new KLARUS XT12; this utilises a CREE XM-L2-U2 LED, delivering a HUGE maximum output of 930 ANSI Lumens, giving you more brightness than even the improved XT11. It's powered by a custom KLARUS 2600mAh 3.7V rechargeable Li-ion battery using a Samsung cell, designed to automatically align +/- polarity regardless of which way you insert the battery. There's a specially designed Direct Recharging function which means no need for battery removal or a charger, which makes the XT12 simple and light-weight; the patented self-locating Magnetic FAST Connection charging system is astounding too. When the charging cable is within 1cm of the charging port, it self-locates to make the connection. The charging cable can be removed quickly and safely at any time, which makes it an effective flashlight to use in rapid response situations. It uses a standard USB port for charging, so you can recharge at home, in the office, airport, vehicle or anywhere that has a USB charging port available. As with the XT11 it has the dual button tail cap for ease of use, making switching between functions very fast indeed. It retains the strike bezel and is waterproof to 2m so all in all this is a solid, powerful piece of kit!



And last but not least comes another industry first from KLARUS; the TR10 Multi Outlet Pressure Switch. This accessory replaces the dual button tail cap which is fitted as standard to the XT range and is absolutely superb. The constant-on switch (circular button) is on the remote pressure pad, so there's no need to reach for the tail-cap of the flashlight to access the controls. The pressure switch provides multiple outputs and tactical momentary-on function. The constant-on switch also provides access to High-Mid-Low modes and strobe. There is a signal controlled switch which means no loss of efficiency. With many other remote switches the power efficiency is affected, which shortens the battery life and run time; in fact in super low standby mode (current 3uA) the switch consumes almost zero battery life! With the switch mounted to your rifle (there's a velcro fitting system included) ease of operation is simplified once you work out the easy to learn sequence and there's absolutely no need to move your hand. With a SRP of just £19.94 there is absolutely no reason I wouldn't add this to my tactical setup.

I have to say that I am incredibly impressed with these new additions and updates and I can see that I'll be continuing to use KLARUS lights in the future. There's a great lineup of models in the range, quite literally something for everybody and I'd urge to visit www.taclight.co.uk to view them all and find stockist details close to home!

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BRITISH AIRSOFT SHOW 2015

NIGE REPORTS FROM THIS YEAR'S BRITISH AIRSOFT SHOW AND ASKS "HAS IT REACHED THE END OF THE ROAD?"

THEY SAY "FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS COME great things" and over the past few years that could most certainly be true of The British Airsoft Show.

Six years ago the "show" was a solitary airsoft range, tucked away in a corner of the British Shooting Show. Run by Ratty from BadgerTac, it was such a huge success it not only ran out of ammo on the first day, it also encouraged the organisers to think bigger and an embryonic British Airsoft Show kicked its way into life.

Over the next two years, the presence of airsofters at what is essentially seen as a "hunting, shooting, fishing-brigade" show, was by and large welcomed (although I couldn't help feeling it was perceived more as a "distraction" from the "real" business of shooting, as opposed to a "serious" pastime, by many shooters). I will never forget the six-deep crush at the JD Airsoft and combined BadgerTac/BadgerTac2 stands, as "real shooters" couldn't wait to get their eyes and hands on the massive display of pistols, rifles and other kit.



Unfortunately, this also lead to some very disgruntled "gentlemen" reacting badly to the news that although they might have firearms licences and a collection of shotguns worth over £100,000, they could still not legally be sold a Realistic Imitation Firearm or, as one such gentleman so eloquently put it "a bloody plastic toy gun"!

In 2013 the British Airsoft Show moved to its current home at Stoneleigh Park and the British Airsoft Show finally became an individual entity, with its own area, advertising, marketing and promotion. OK, so the "area" turned out to be little more than a (very) cold, concrete-floored, cow-shed-cum-car-park but once the public arrived it soon filled with throngs of visitors eager to see what airsoft had to offer and, despite the "shaky" start, the show was deemed a big success.

2013 was a learning curve and the organisers were quick to realise that things such as heating and lighting were just as important to airsofters as they are to every other type of shooting enthusiast - and that if you don't want clouds of smoke from pyros drifting through the show, you need to partition off the Stirling Airsoft demo area!

One of the big issues from the 2013 show was the huge number of vehicles trying to get into the single open entrance

"THE LARGE AMOUNT OF SPACE ALLOWED FOR MORE RELAXED BROWSING, RATHER THAN THE "PUSH-AND-SHOVE" OF THE SHOOTING SHOW NEXT DOOR. IT ALSO MEANT THERE WAS SPACE FOR A SIX-LEGGED, MINI-GUN-TOTING BEHEMOTH TO STOMP ITS WAY AROUND THE HALL!"







at Stoneleigh. It took Gadge and his companions nearly three hours to travel the few miles from the motorway!

For 2014, the show was extended to three days and more entrances were opened. The Airsoft Show was in the same area but now had huge heaters blowing warm air in and the floor had been carpeted - a great improvement. There was also much more going on in the way of visitor interaction, with shooting ranges, guest appearances and a full-on programme of events being run by Stirling. All in all the show was seen as a big success, tarnished only by some overnight thefts and the odd disgruntled shooter not understanding that they could not legally be sold a RIF without a valid defence.

We were also very sad to learn of the death of the show's founder, John Bertrand, which occurred on the Saturday night.

The 2015 show was again held at Stoneleigh, run by new owners FRL Media Group, who publish a number of related titles and, to be honest, were probably not as up to speed with what the British Airsoft Show was, as they might have been. This was evident from plans to turn the central "airsoft" area into a Military Vehicle display and introduce a .22 shooting range by halving the amount of display space given over to Stirling Airsoft. However, the major issue for many of the potential retailers was a hefty increase in the cost of renting a stand, which I understand was in the region of 60% in some cases. This lead to a number of exhibitors from previous years withdrawing, whilst others reduced their overall space. That having been said, there were also a number of "new faces", such as Airsoft Zone, CQC and Tactical Kit but the lack of some "big guns" was evident.

In the face of such apparent "negativity" you might expect I would report that the show was not up to much but, in fact, it was the exact opposite! From what I saw and the many, many *many*, people I spoke to, the vast majority said it was very good (although a little lacking in "substance"). Certainly we were kept very busy on the *Airsoft Action* stand, where we were supported by the guys from Pro-Tact Shooting and a number of Contributors throughout the weekend. Championship Shooter, Mark Hurding, was also with us and he brought along a selection of his competition pistols to display - which seemed to attract a lot of attention among real-steel shooters as well as airsofters. Interestingly (and as Mark pointed out), even though they were top-flight tournament-ready pistols, as the top slides and grip-frames were anodised in bright colours, they are deemed as two-tone and therefore do not need a VCR defence in order to be purchased, providing the purchaser was 18+ of course!

"Action shooting" was also the order of the day at RedWolf Airsoft where, alongside their usual stand (which was absolutely swamped on occasions) they had built a short DAS (Dynamic Action Shooting) course. Consisting of two fully furnished rooms (I kid you not - the dining room even had the remnants of the previous night's pizza still on the table!), the scenario was that you were at home watching TV when a group of ne'er-do-wells try to enter. Grabbing your trusty Glock (which just happened to be on the coffee table) you have to take them all out in the shortest time possible. Judging by the queue of eager participants, which included IPAS, IPSC and UKPSA shooters, this type shooting discipline holds a lot of interest for a lot of people.



There was also plenty of activity over at the Stirling Airsoft Demo area, where they had constructed a maze of rooms and corridors from their inflatable "village" sections and teams of players were competing head to







head. Individuals were also taking part in a daily "speed and accuracy" competition, with the fastest competitor on each day winning a prize.

On the odd occasion I managed to get away from the stand it was clearly evident that the thirst for airsoft was not diminished by the reduced number of stands and, in one respect, the large amount of space allowed for more relaxed browsing, rather than the "push-and-shove" of the Shooting Show next door. It also meant there was space for a six-legged, mini-gun-toting behemoth to stomp its way around the hall!

At the 2014 show, Beltec launched their awesome remote-controlled turret. We had one alongside the *Airsoft Action* stand and it (quite literally) stopped people in their tracks as it's weaponry appeared to first locate and then track them as they walked past. Not content with that, Grant and his team wanted something completely different so they made it bigger (much, much bigger), 100 times more bad-ass and, above all, mobile! Watching people's faces and reactions as it pounded its way around the area and between to stands was almost as good as watching the thing itself!

There were a couple of other things that caught my eye at the show.

Before the show, Incentive Designs had announced they were stalling the launch of their new multi-shot blank firing grenade until it became clear which way the market was going with them. However, when I stopped by to chat to Incentive's Jason Cameron, I spotted them behind the counter and couldn't resist having a closer look. I have to say that they are beautifully made and the quality of manufacture was evident throughout, so why wouldn't Incentive be launching them?

The answer was simple. Jason told me he had "something up [his] sleeve" and wanted to just hold back whilst the last bits of development were completed. Speaking to him more recently, he has confirmed that the new Incentive Designs bfg will be a 5-shot multi-bang, with the facility to use both 9mm and shot-gun primers in one unit. At the time of writing we are waiting for final details.



Over at The Grange, Jim Sefton showed me one of those "why didn't I think of that" items - a mag conversion to HPA. Obviously there are one or two other considerations but in simple terms it is a gas mag that has had the fill nozzle removed and replaced with an HPA connector.

The popularity of HPA in airsoft is growing and as more and more weapons come to the market and the cost starts to reduce, the attraction and simplicity of HPA, coupled with the technological innovations that are coming with it, is likely to see a big expansion in this sector of the market. However, possibly the biggest stir was caused when Krytac AEGs were spotted on a stand in the Shooting Show!

There, sitting resplendent on the *SHIELD Firearms and Sights* stand was the full range, albeit with orange tips and as samples only. But here was something we did not think was even in the UK yet. Scott Allan had seen them at SHOT and we were all expecting the formal European launch to be at IWA, in March.

Talking to SHIELD's Sales Manager, Ken Saville, it transpired that they had been granted the UK Distribution rights for Krytac .22 rifles and were working to secure the distribution of the airsoft versions as well (which has since been confirmed by Ken). Needless to say, I couldn't resist the temptation to ask if we could "borrow" a couple to put on the *Airsoft Action* stand and so, once again, we were able to offer UK airsofters an exclusive glimpse of long-awaited rifles.

Judging by the reaction of players, Kriss/Krytac have got it right and providing the pricing is correct and there are no supply issues, it will not be long before we see Krytac aegs being used by many. Of course, we will also be reviewing them



in *Airsoft Action*, so watch out for that in the near future.

There was one other "first" I want to mention before closing and that was the presence at the show of Rusty Firmin.

As you may well know, Rusty led the Blue Team assault at The Iranian Embassy Siege, on May 5th 1980 and, although that was not the only action that he was involved in during his career, it is the one that catapulted the Regiment into the limelight and stamped the letters "SAS" in history books forever. Since retiring from active service, Rusty has become a well-published author and his book "Go! Go! Go! The Iranian Embassy Siege. The True Story." is seen as the definitive story of Operation Nimrod written, as it was, by a man who was at the very heart of the action.

What you may not know is that Rusty is also an ambassador for the charity "Pilgrim Bandits" (pilgrimbandits.org), a charity established in 2007 by a group of ex-SF soldiers in order to help wounded soldiers live a full life. Pilgrim Bandits had set up a display next to the RedWolf Airsoft stand and were received with such a warm welcome from airsofters (and nearly £800 in donations), they have agreed to allow *Airsoft Action* to adopt them as our officially supported charity. I know you will understand when I say it is an honour and a privilege to do so.

As the show drew to a close on the Sunday and things quietened down, I took the opportunity to do one final "lap" of the stands and talk to as many exhibitors as possible, to gauge their initial reactions and thoughts - and I have to say the response was fairly mixed to say the least.

The majority of retailers felt that they had "just about broken even" on the costs it took to be there. One or two said they hadn't, whilst others, most notably The Grange, said they'd had "a very good show" and gained a great deal of interest in the Polarstar range. A couple said that they'd not covered their costs and were doubtful they would return next year and, to be honest, that sentiment seemed to be a common theme amongst the majority - which leads me back to the question posed at the start of this article: "Has the British Airsoft Show reached the end of the road?"

I would be very sad if it has but I also understand that to be there costs a great deal of time and money and, if you are not going to even cover your costs, then it does beg the question as to whether it is worth it? Sure, on the PR side of things and to help promote the sport, it is always worth it and, as I have often stated, if it promotes airsoft then I am up for supporting it but (and here's the rub) it also has to be commercially viable for those that attend.

There is a new show this year, The Airsoft Showcase 2015, which is being organised and promoted by RedWolf Airsoft, where the costs to exhibitors will be considerably lower and the audience 100% airsoft. Once again, *Airsoft Action* will be supporting and promoting it to the best of our abilities and I understand from Chris Kong at RedWolf, that more than 20 stands have already been booked. Maybe the key to success at next year's British Airsoft Show is to take a leaf out of RedWolf's book; make it more cost-effective by reducing the cost to exhibitors and creating a separate entrance to just the Airsoft Show – with a lower entrance fee.

Just my opinion of course…

Congrats to all the winners of the Stirling Airsoft competitions and also to Steve Mann for Herefordshire, who won £700-worth of Custom KJ Works M4 in the "Dave's Custom Airsoft Raffle" – I understand he was more than a little delighted!

I would like to add a personal "thank you" to all the people who offered their help and support at the show, not least of which was Andy, Tyke and Jack from Pro-Tact Training who helped set up and dress the stand – and even slept there!

Thanks also to all the contributors who dropped by, it was great to catch up and have the chance to actually meet for once, rather than communicate by phone and email.

Last and by no means least, a huge thank you to the hundreds of players who came by and for all your positive comments and kind words – they were very much appreciated.

Nige.

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THE CHANGING LAWS OF THE LAND

AIRSOFT ACTION DEBATES ALWAYS GARNER A GOOD RESPONSE BUT NONE MORE SO THAN THE SUBJECT GADGE TACKLES THIS MONTH: THE LEGAL STATUS OF AIRSOFT.



ONCE AGAIN WE ASKED YOUR OPINION on one of the trickier issues in airsoft today; we asked you to consider the legal status of airsoft in the UK as it stands - and as it could be in the future. Without a shadow of a doubt this topic sparked up a raging debate on our Facebook page - perhaps the most in-depth debate we've ever had!

Only a few years back the Violent Crimes Reduction Act (VCRA) shook up the airsoft world, with the ruling that now a defence was required to sell, make or import a Realistic Imitation Firearm (RIF). Many people felt this was an infringement on their liberties, others saw it as something of a hassle but a minor hurdle to overcome and trivial annoyance to bear as long as it kept the game legal.

While many countries suffer restrictions on the ability to fire full auto, mandatory two-toning or blaze orange barrel sections and other legal impediments to "military simulation" in airsoft, in the UK we got off pretty lightly as most serious skirmishers found they were eligible for a defence or easily could be. *Airsoft Action* were however dismayed to read that one of the UK's up and coming political parties (not one of the "big boys") had some shocking plans for skirmishers. If they came to power, then all deactivated guns would come under the same controls as live firearms and more importantly RIFS for airsoft would be banned entirely!

"DO YOU LIVE IN A LAND WHERE YOU'RE NOT EVEN ALLOWED A RIF (IF YOU DO YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT GOING TO BE READING THIS) OR DOES YOUR COUNTRY ALLOW YOU MORE FREEDOM OF CHOICE?"

So we asked our readers; how much is a sensible measure of control? Are we over-regulated already? Do you miss the old days, when anyone could just ring up "Airsoft Dynamics" and order a G36c and have it arrive the next day? Is UKARA a great thing or a pain in the bum? Do you live in a land where you're not even allowed a RIF (if you do you're probably not going to be reading this) or does your country allow you more freedom of choice?

As you can see we were inundated with replies and with a heavy heart we had to edit and cut out pages of comments to bring you the best of the bunch. So without further ado, I'll give the floor to you, the readers and let you "have your say":

Dan Holloway: "UKARA does seem like a hassle but it is meant to help airsofters with giving them a defence for buying replicas but there are still people that break the law and rules about RIFs. Even if the laws and regulations got tighter you would unfortunately still get the select few that will still break the law until the decision to ban RIFs comes in. Unfortunately like everything there is always a few that will ruin it for everyone."

Dan Rox: "Australia – NO Airsoft at all, 100% illegal! Paintball, legal with a firearms licence. I'm campaigning to legalise it in one state and the rest should follow if successful. 50/50 chance at the moment. Wish me luck!" (Good luck Dan! Nige - Ed.)

Anthony Lowrey: "I live in Poland now and it's a completely open market. Not even an orange tip is legally required. I love it here!"

Jon Cull: "It is sorry state of affairs in a so-called "free" democratic society that we have legislation restricting the sale of Toys. Madness!"

Steve Cox: "I'm fairly young in airsoft (4-5 years). I don't have a problem with UKARA, it seems to work fine but think there should be more restrictions on 2 tones as anyone can go to a market and get one, respray it and hurt our sport and I kinda doubt most market stalls check the buyer and sell to anyone, at any age."

Parachute Regiment Airsoft: "In SPAIN for now it's legal, our "weapons" are classified as LUDICO SPORTING ARMS fourth category, in REGULATION OF WEAPONS AND EXPLOSIVES Interior Ministry."

Matt Houghton: "Every year our freedoms are eroded, no longer are we as free, liberalism is about removing rights now instead of enforcing freedom."

Barnes Kno Al: "Ive always felt the government can legislate me and send as many hoops my way as they like so long as they don't restrict what I can have. That's not happened and it's getting worse. Until the media stop vilifying "guns" and learn what the term "weapon" actually implies, the public in general will continue to misunderstand our sports, hobbies and interests."

Kris Fentiman: "The fact is that these are toys and the only reason for the legislation is that some numpty in Whitehall had a brainfart. Were as I could go into Manchester or London and buy a real and illegal Ak47 easier than I can buy a toy one. Legislation only hits those of us who follow the law while a criminal will not care about airsoft weapons."

Gareth Davenport: "As somebody who joined the sport just as the law was changing, I bought my first RIF with no hassle and was registered shortly after only for it to lapse and have to go through it all again. At this point my only issue with UKARA is that I have to keep paying to prove I play when I already own or have access to extensive collections and play as and when I can."

Matt Keen: "We need to be seen to be responsible. If we have been seen to self-regulate successfully and maintain a low profile in terms of crimes committed with Airsoft related equipment including RIFs then there is no need for change."

Matt Furey-King: "Please don't start sending abusive emails to the politicians. I'm a member of the Green Party and talking to their working group who are reviewing crime policy at the moment. The people who wrote it likely hadn't heard of legitimate uses for replicas. We're still a niche hobby. Go through the proper channels and we can do something. Just don't do what airsoft players usually do and email insults and threats with the caps lock on!"

Chris Hinds: "I have been playing airsoft for 4 years now and I feel that these laws in place now are great, everything works as its suppose to. However, apart from if they bring this new party's law in, then what are we supposed to do? Thanks to airsoft, I have made friends and increased my confidence as well, so banning Airsoft weapons will destroy the most social, team working sport that we all enjoy."

Nick Thompson: "What confuses me is that I can go and buy an air pistol or rifle that looks as realistic as any airsoft RIF with no checks what so ever. Likewise paintball (sorry) markers are still not within the bounds of the VCRA despite here being a growth in the number of mag-fed and generally realistic looking guns. One of the biggest problems is the over-abundance of cheap nasty two tones on market stalls and even corner shops, orange tips don't help either as there have been cases Stateside where police have recovered real firearms with orange tips (the only legal requirement in most states) and one case of a shotgun inside a super soaker!"

Jamie Weir: "It's not possible to legislate against idiots, regardless of how many laws there are there will always be."

Barry Hurst: "UKARA is not as effective as it is a retailer run organisation at present, which some retailers/retailer-based sites have managed to interpret how they feel. I personally have no problem with UKARA registration because I skirmish on a fairly regular basis. Yes it's a pain for beginners to the sport to have to wait for 3 games but it also weeds out a lot of people who just want a RIF to run around on the streets with and give our hobby a bad press.

I think that if UKARA is to continue, the retailers need to set the UKARA rules on selling in stone so that retailers all have a

level playing field. The same goes for any membership/admin fees and throw out any retailer regardless of who they are if they flout these rules."

Lex Griffiths: "VCRA was clearly a knee-jerk reaction by politicians looking to be seen to be tackling an issue when they were simply treating the symptoms and not the disease itself and only due to the heroic efforts of a small number of our community were we able to get an exemption at all. If criminals want to get their hands on firearms, real or otherwise, the VCRA does bugger all to stop them and I frankly would rather see better regulation, than the near outright ban we currently have in place. The culture of fear surrounding guns in this country blinds most people to the fact that guns are only as dangerous as the person behind the trigger."

Andy Tough: "Difficult topic. UKARA doesn't really do its job. I'm sure we all know of people out there that are under-age that have received a weapon that is not 2-tone, or people that have no UKARA that also have a weapon. I don't think 2-tone guns should be sold at all as it defeats the purpose of UKARA. Anyone can still pick up a 2-tone and shoot their neighbour's kids and give all skirmishers a bad name."

Anthony Marsh: "The problem only ever relies on those that will offend regardless of the law. This can be applied across the board to any potential weapon, you only have to be 18 to buy an axe, sword or knife etc., you don't have to prove your usage and yet these can be serious weapons. You are allowed to use them in your own home or professionally, just not carry them without reason in public. I appreciate that visually an RIF can cause a lot of alarm and panic but that is about it, you are only endangering yourself by risking getting shot by armed response police! They can only be really used as a threat, not actual violence and so I think the restrictions on them are a little too severe. Don't ban something that if used properly is harmless, otherwise you might as well ban swimming pools because you can drown, or cricket bats because they are potential weapons. Abusers will abuse, regardless of the law.

The law is well and truly justified when it states that RIFs should not be wielded in public, it saves more trouble without hindering any legitimate users; the same as the illegal knife carry law. But to prohibit the sale to anyone, let alone legitimate users only decreases the public image and also the influx of newcomers to the sport. It doesn't matter who they are sold to when they can't do any real damage, anyone can hurt someone and anyone can threaten and cause panic, an airsoft weapon will never change this fact."

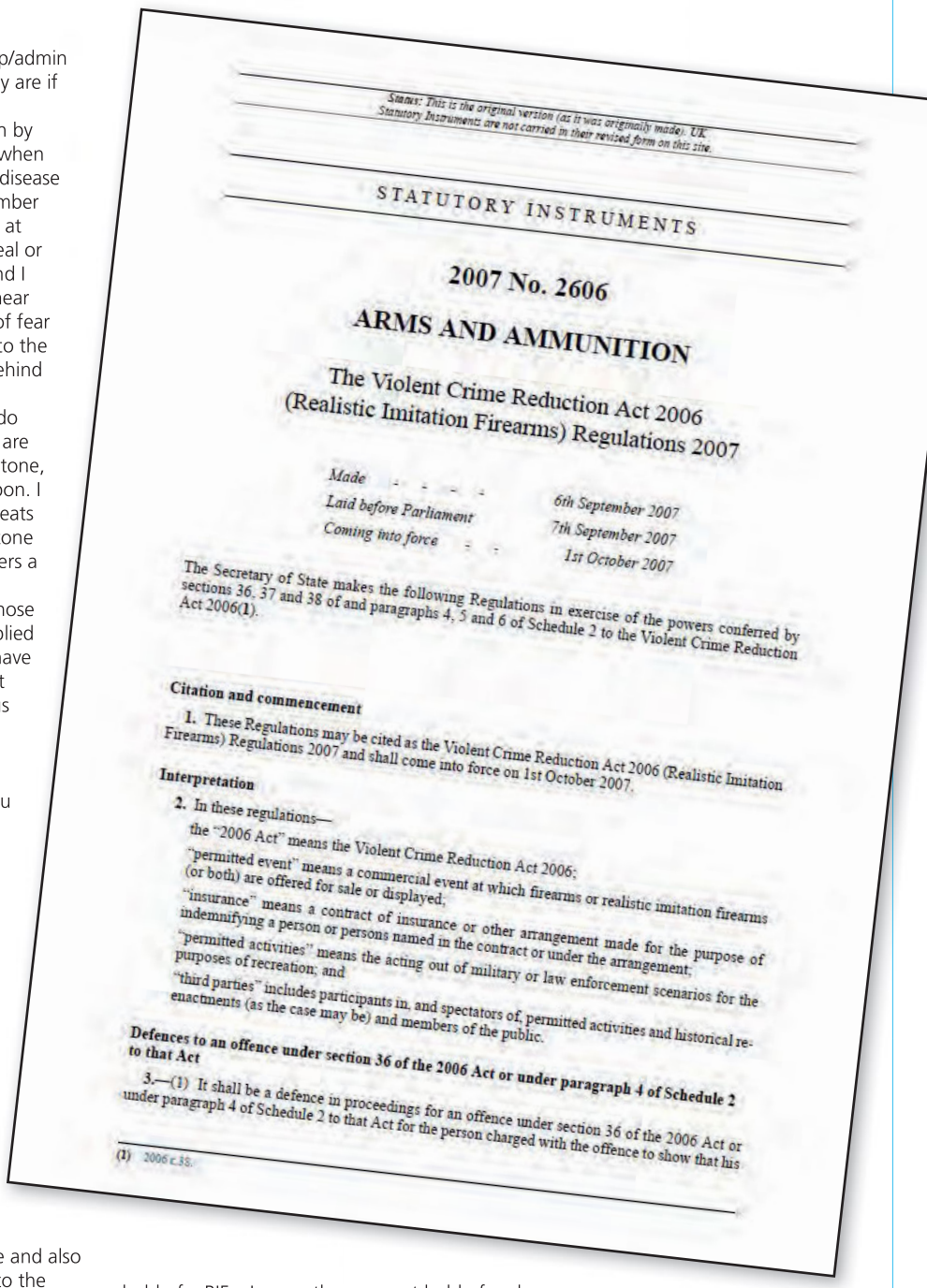
Dean Goodall: "Looking at it from the problem or criminal end (and no, I'm not a criminal!), how many crimes are actually committed with RIFs or air soft weapons? If you have criminal intent, you're not going to get a defence and have your details registered (so it could be argued that UKARA works?), you're going to buy a two tone and respray. Not being able to buy a RIF when you've just legally bought a shotgun does, however, seem bizarre and inconsistent. Perhaps the law could be amended to allow RIFs to be added on to a non UKARA registered persons FAC?"

Peter O'Connor: "I don't think the current UKARA system does much more than inconvenience skirmishers, it certainly wouldn't stop someone who had criminal intent from getting hold of a RIF – I mean they can get hold of real firearms for less money than an airsoft gun can cost. We have to be careful in kicking up a stink about UKARA being detrimental to the sport as there are political parties out there that could and would stop us playing entirely."

Mark Law: "I feel the rules in place are good enough as they stand, the problem still lies with the market traders and rogue shops choosing to ignore the rules. After all if there was a big problem with sale and use of RIFs the papers would be full of horror stories."

Adrian McCarthy: "I personally believe that the rules for Airsoft as they stand at the moment: that you are 18 or older and attend 3 skirmishes is completely adequate. I mean once you've done three games you become eligible for a defence, but the main thing is, YOU ARE NOR BEING FORCED TO GET ONE."

Jamie Richard Andrews: "I personally don't have UKARA but I have another defence under VCR act but some people still don't understand the law and how it's worded can be hard for people to understand. Also I find it weird that you can have a FAC or Shotgun licence but can't get an air soft rifle."



Status: This is the original version (as it was originally made). UK Statutory Instruments are not carried in their revised form on this site.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

2007 No. 2606

ARMS AND AMMUNITION

The Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 (Realistic Imitation Firearms) Regulations 2007

Made - - - - 6th September 2007
Laid before Parliament 7th September 2007
Coming into force - - 1st October 2007

The Secretary of State makes the following Regulations in exercise of the powers conferred by sections 36, 37 and 38 of and paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 of Schedule 2 to the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006(1).

Citation and commencement

1. These Regulations may be cited as the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 (Realistic Imitation Firearms) Regulations 2007 and shall come into force on 1st October 2007.

Interpretation

2. In these regulations—

"the 2006 Act" means the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006;

"permitted event" means a commercial event at which firearms or realistic imitation firearms (or both) are offered for sale or displayed;

"insurance" means a contract of insurance or other arrangement made for the purpose of indemnifying a person or persons named in the contract or under the arrangement;

"permitted activities" means the acting out of military or law enforcement scenarios for the purposes of recreation; and

"third parties" includes participants in, and spectators of, permitted activities and historical re-enactments (as the case may be) and members of the public.

Defences to an offence under section 36 of the 2006 Act or under paragraph 4 of Schedule 2 to that Act

3.—(1) It shall be a defence in proceedings for an offence under section 36 of the 2006 Act or under paragraph 4 of Schedule 2 to that Act for the person charged with the offence to show that his

(1) 2006 c.38.

VIOLENT CRIME REDUCTION ACT (2006)

ALTHOUGH THE VCRA HAS BEEN WITH US FOR A WHILE, THERE IS STILL SOME CONFUSION SURROUNDING EXACTLY WHAT IT SAYS AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHAT IT DOES – AND DOES NOT DO. NIGE EXPLAINS…

FIRST UP, LET ME STATE THAT EVERYTHING quoted here is taken from Legal documentation that is publicly available to anyone who cares to ask for it (or download it off the relevant Government website – which is what I did).

The biggest misconception about the Violent Crimes Reduction Act 2006 (VCRA), is that it bans the purchase of Realistic Imitation Firearms (RIF) – it doesn't! This is what it actually does…

Taken from: Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 (c.38) Part 2 – Weapons etc., under the heading "Imitation Firearms".

"Section 36: Manufacture, import and sale of realistic imitation firearms

(1) A person is guilty of an offence if –

(a) He manufactures a realistic imitation firearm;

(b) He modifies an imitation firearm so that it becomes a realistic imitation firearm;

(c) He sells a realistic imitation firearm; or

(d) He brings a realistic imitation firearm into Great Britain or causes one to be brought into Great Britain."

As you can clearly see, the VCRA bans the importation, manufacture (including modification) and the SALE of RIFs, *not* the purchase – neither did it ban ownership, gifting, raffles and other prizes.

As one of our respondents to Gadge's debate points out, if it was not for the hard work and efforts of a very small group of individuals (and one in particular), who lobbied MPs to create a defence, airsoft as we know it would have died a slow death as guns wore out and could not be replaced.

The VCRA allowed certain groups an immediate defence, such as Museums and Galleries, theatrical performances, film and television production, historical re-enactment and if you were to use it in your "capacity as a person in the service of Her Majesty".

"THE VCRA BANS THE IMPORTATION, MANUFACTURE (INCLUDING MODIFICATION) AND THE SALE OF RIFS, NOT THE PURCHASE - NEITHER DID IT BAN OWNERSHIP, GIFTING, RAFFLES AND OTHER PRIZES."

It was obvious that a defence was needed for airsoft and that MPs needed to be persuaded that our sport/game/hobby/pastime was worth saving.

On 7th September 2007, *Statutory Instrument 2007 N. 2606: Arms and Ammunition – The Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 (Realistic Imitation Firearms) Regulations 2007* was Laid before Parliament by Tony McNulty, then Minister of State, before coming into force on 1st October 2007.

Please note that this is specifically titled "Realistic Imitation Firearms Regulations" and "came into force" – they are NOT part of the VCRA, they are (in simple terms) an addendum to it and as such, are NOT part of the Law of the Land and can be repealed at any time without a change in the Law being required. However, what this rather wordy-titled document did was provide the defence that retailers needed in order to be able to sell RIFs.

I am not going to explore the creation, whys and wherefores of UKARA as that is not what this article is about but, as part of the deliberations prior to 2007 No. 2606 being made, much discussion regarding how airsoft retailers could ensure they were selling only to people who had a legitimate reason for ownership was had. UKARA was created as a result of those discussions and the "play three times in not less than 56 days at an insured airsoft site" became the de-facto level of due diligence required but, as is often mis-stated, "UKARA", "airsoft", "licence" and any other words relating to it **do not appear** in either VCRA, or 2007 N. 2606.

The defence is very, very straightforward and appears as Section 3 of 2007 N. 2606:

"Defences to an offence under section 36 of the 2006 Act or under paragraph 4 of Schedule 2 to that Act

3. (1) It shall be a defence in proceedings for an offence under section 36 of the 2006 Act or under paragraph 4 of Schedule 2 to that Act for the person charged with the offence to show that his conduct was for the purpose only of making the imitation firearm in question available for one or more of the purposes specified in paragraph (2).

(2) Those purposes are –

(a) the organisation and holding of permitted activities for which public liability insurance is held in relation to liabilities to third parties arising from or in connection with the organisation and holding of those activities;

(b) the purposes of display at a permitted event.

In Section 2, under the heading "Interpretation", a "permitted event" means a commercial event at which firearms or realistic imitation firearms (or both) are offered for sale or displayed and "permitted activities" means the acting out of military or law enforcement scenarios for the purposes of recreation.

In plain English: "If someone is being prosecuted for selling a RIF and can prove it was sold for use in airsoft at a third-party liability insured event, then no offence has been committed".

Those few words are why we have airsoft as we know it – nothing more, nothing less and no further interpretation needed.

The only document I can find which makes any reference whatsoever to "airsoft", was from the House of Commons Library "Statutory controls on firearms" – Standard Note: SN/HA/3639, which I understand to be a Parliamentary Briefing Paper.

On Page 10, paragraph 4, it says: *"Regulations have now been laid and came into force on 1 October 2007. The regulations provide for two new defences. The first is for the organisation and holding of "airsoft" skirmishing. This is defined by reference to "permitted activities" and the defence applies only where third party liability insurance is held in respect of the activities. The second new defence is for the purpose of display at arms fairs, defined in the regulations by reference to "permitted events". The regulations also specify the persons who can claim the defence for historical re-enactment. This is restricted to those organising or taking part in re-enactment activities for which third party liability insurance is held."*

As I said earlier, all this information is readily available on Government websites but if you want to see just the relevant sections, head over to the Airsoft Action website (http://www.airsoft-action.co.uk/the-vcr-act-and-airsoft).

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HUNGER BAT



OSCAR P TAKES PART IN GUNMAN'S VERSION OF THE WELL-KNOWN SERIES OF BOOKS AND FILMS AND FINDS HIMSELF EMBROILED IN A BATTLE ROYALE.

TLES

AIRSOFT GAMES OFTEN HOLD A MIRROR UP to the real world. It's by no means unusual for sites to run scenarios based on historic or contemporary conflicts, with players divided into teams roughly equating to real protagonists. However, fictional conflicts also provide a rich source of inspiration for airsoft games and it's not difficult to find individual games or entire series based on Zombie Movies, video games like Fallout, or the latest action flick. I think that this, for the avoidance of doubt, is A Good Thing as it is fun to leaven the mix of scenarios with something less sobering from time to time.

I popped along to Gunman Airsoft to try out just such an event, called "Hunger Battles". As you'll guess, this is loosely based around the massively popular Hunger Games books and films, mixed up with a touch of the Japanese classic "Battle Royale". Most of you will be familiar with the former but if you've not heard of Battle Royale, it's about a class of Schoolchildren who are provided with an arsenal of weapons and made to fight each other until only one is left standing. Bonkers stuff!

For this event, held at Eversley in Hampshire, Gunman boiled the stories down to the basics – they are about survival, working independently or in small groups and about the importance of resources. That translated to a game where teams would have to fight over a small number of objectives, collecting and holding them in a harbour area until endex. So far, so straightforward.

However, where the game mixed it up was in the way the teams were divided – and how the resources would come into play. For a start, we were split into three teams rather than the conventional two, meaning we would always have to watch our backs… if we got into a barney with one opposing force, the other could well take us from behind.

The resources themselves were to be dropped in a steady stream, though not in just the one place. Throughout the first half of the game the various items (food, water and medical supplies) were released into play somewhere within a central section of the site, sparking a furious scrap to grab them, get them back to teams' respective bases, then defend them whilst trying raid the opposition!

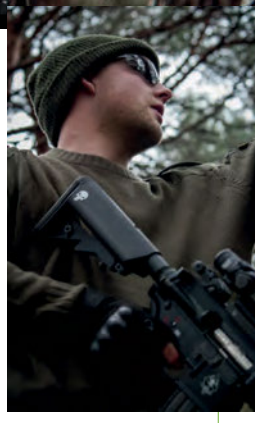
However, victory wouldn't go simply to the team with the greatest number of objectives. Instead, to win a team needed to have a complete set – one each of water, food and medical kit. And to put the pressure on, the cunning chaps at Gunman were releasing only two of each into play, so there weren't enough to go around! Teams would really have to scrap to collect a full slate!

As if that wasn't enough, there were a couple of further twists. We weren't told where the other teams were based, so we had to try and figure out their location. More importantly, we had one uber-pressing task to get sorted right at the beginning… we needed ammo. It being a "survival" game, each player only started with one hundred rounds per life. That's right: one dinky speedloader-full! Fortunately, out on site were a few ammo crates, which when found would allow players to bomb-up 600 into their mags, though reloading was only allowed at base or at the mobile spawn point which was allocated to each team. Clearly, securing the ability to upgrade our ammo would be essential and that early ammo-limit it had definitely influenced people's loadouts. A high proportion of players (including muggins, here!) were toting sniper rifles even though Eversley is a fairly densely wooded site and it can be tricky to get a decent sight-lines allowing you to take a shot with the 30m engagement distance imposed on high-FPS weapons.









"THE EARLY AMMO-LIMIT IT HAD DEFINITELY INFLUENCED PEOPLE'S LOADOUTS. A HIGH PROPORTION OF PLAYERS (INCLUDING MUGGINS, HERE!) WERE TOTING SNIPER RIFLES EVEN THOUGH EVERSLEY IS A FAIRLY DENSELY WOODED SITE."



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The final thing that was different was the pyro system, where Gunman had tweaked their rules. Firstly, pyro kills were *injuries* rather than straight-away KIA. That was to both balance out the respawn rate but also because, frankly, everyone likes advancing through masses of players they've just tagged out! Secondly, Gunman were trying the concept of "incendiary" grenades as "area denial weapons". If a red smoke popped off nearby, players had to move at least 5 meters away from it in response to the simulated blaze and could not return to the area whilst the pyro was still burning. Over the course of the day I saw these used to good effect to clear out areas, force people away from cover and also to screen retreats by blocking off pathways through the scrub. All in all, it was a nice innovation.

"LONG STORY SHORT, THIS GAME GAVE ME MORE OF A SENSE OF TEAMWORK THAN MANY A MILSIM I'VE PLAYED AND THAT IS A REALLY, REALLY FUN THING TO HAVE!"

So, on to the game! We had 30-odd players in total, split into teams of around 10. I tagged along with Alpha, the leader of which won a game of rock-paper-scissors and opted to base us at a sand-bagged emplacement atop a low hill in one corner of the site. The other teams dispersed to their harbours, then at the blast of a whistle we all went hooning off into the centre of the site to try and find the ammo!

Luckily we were first there – as the bulk of my team advanced in a sensible, tactical wedge I scooted off like a gormless hound chasing a squirrel and, purely by chance, stumbled across the stack of ammo crates. As contacts sparked off to the front and side of me (I think the other two teams bumped into each other) I decided that I may as well try a quick snatch and grab and dashed over to the pile of crates. Luckily, no-one was in sight, so I was able to get a crate into cover: job done! At this point, I had a bit of an idea. Remember I mentioned I was carrying a sniper rifle? It suddenly occurred to me that as I had a good, clear sightline to the other two crates, I was in an ideal position to try and prevent the other two teams getting their resupply, so I passed the ammo crate to a teammate to get back to base and squirreled down into a bush. After a few minutes there had been no movement, so I decided that I should try and get myself further into cover (I'm not exactly dainty, and I need a lot of shrub to conceal my bulk). After a couple more minutes of shuffling around, I decided that I was in decent concealment and took a look down my sights at the crates… only to discover they had gone! Whilst I'd been fussing and faffing, the other teams had grabbed them. I think, dear reader, we'll call that a fail!







Meanwhile, a ferocious skirmish had erupted in the middle of the site as all three teams tried to get their mitts on the resources being dropped into play. Having abandoned my now-pointless sniping position, I teamed up with an LSW gunner from Alpha and decided to cabby our way around the main fight to see if we could flank. After a couple of minutes of quiet movement (and a couple of seconds of loud contact as LSW dude shot another teammate literally off my back!) we were in position and were able to creep in behind a trio of enemy players and knock them out. The next 45 mins of play carried on in a similar vein, with short sharp battles and manoeuvres over the scarce resources – and at least two more epic fails from Yours Truly. I learnt that it's a bad idea to take cover behind a cart that's got an easy foot and a half of clearance underneath it and that I shouldn't try to repeat my earlier flanking move without a teammate to cover my back. The outcome of both of these mistakes can be summarised as 'ouch'!

The tempo of battle went up a notch about half way through the morning's two-hour game, when all the resources were in play and it became necessary to start raiding the other camps – but that's not to say it became a simple game of capture the flag. Instead, the three-force dynamic meant that the teams as a whole had to think about what they were doing and ensure each had cover at their base locations as well as guys out raiding. It also meant that those who were attacking other camps couldn't assume that they had a secure area behind, as the other team could turn up and hammer them against the anvil of the defending base! On more than one occasion, my team found itself under attack from both Bravo and Charlie, with pressure only coming off the dug-in guys when the attacking teams started shooting at each other as well!

We also realised that the game demanded good tactical awareness; for example, knowing where the other resources were meant we could send a couple of guys off to harass one team, keeping them off the backs of a stronger force tasked to snatch the goodies; for example, I spent a happy half hour lobbing harassing rounds into Bravo's base to try and convince them they were under attack, so the rest of my team could clobber Charlie and snaffle their food! Alas, my fun and games were curtailed when a blinding shot from Bravo sniper smacked into my shoulder – though it was pleasing to see eight of his comrades thunder towards my position to clear out my (non-existent) wingmen! Job done!

The other thing the game setup demanded was good communication to make sure we didn't waste time attacking a base which was entirely empty of objectives – I felt like a right doofus infiltrating one harbour only to discover that there was nothing to nick. More importantly, it was essential to know where the team regen pack was; when the bases were under fire they could not be used to regen or re-bomb and on one occasion we at Alpha lost our pack, meaning none of the team could regen and could do nothing but watch as our position was hammered. I'll just take this opportunity to apologise to my team because, yes, it was me what lost it…

The end of first game came around far too quickly – two hours of play seemed to fly by! After a break for a burger and a brew, I grabbed the cameras and watched the afternoon's game (teams rotated their starting positions) whilst I gathered my thoughts on the scenario and rules.

The short summary is that it was great. The 100 round initial limit meant the game "warmed up" nicely and the multiple-team setup kept things fresh throughout. Numbers wise, a ten-guy team was perfect and I'm pretty sure the setup would work with four or even five similar sections. It was good natured, fluid, and needed you to think. It wasn't what I'd call a MilSim but shared some characteristics. All in all, it was great!

The big thing I took away from the game was about the teamwork. I've played games with, in and against regular teams, where the guys know each other, have good comms and have worked out how to play alongside each other to maximise their skills – but most of the time I go to games on my own and slot in alongside a bunch of guys who I might never have met before. The Hunger Battle game was one of the latter, for me – I pitched up to the site on my lonesome and the biggest group of mates who'd come along together numbered about four. However, the three-team dynamic, the way the resources were played in and the set-up of the site meant that we had to talk, plan and work together. Long story short, this game gave me more of a sense of teamwork than many a MilSim I've played and that is a really, really fun thing to have!

Gunman are planning more events like this and if you get a chance to play one, you should totally give it a go!



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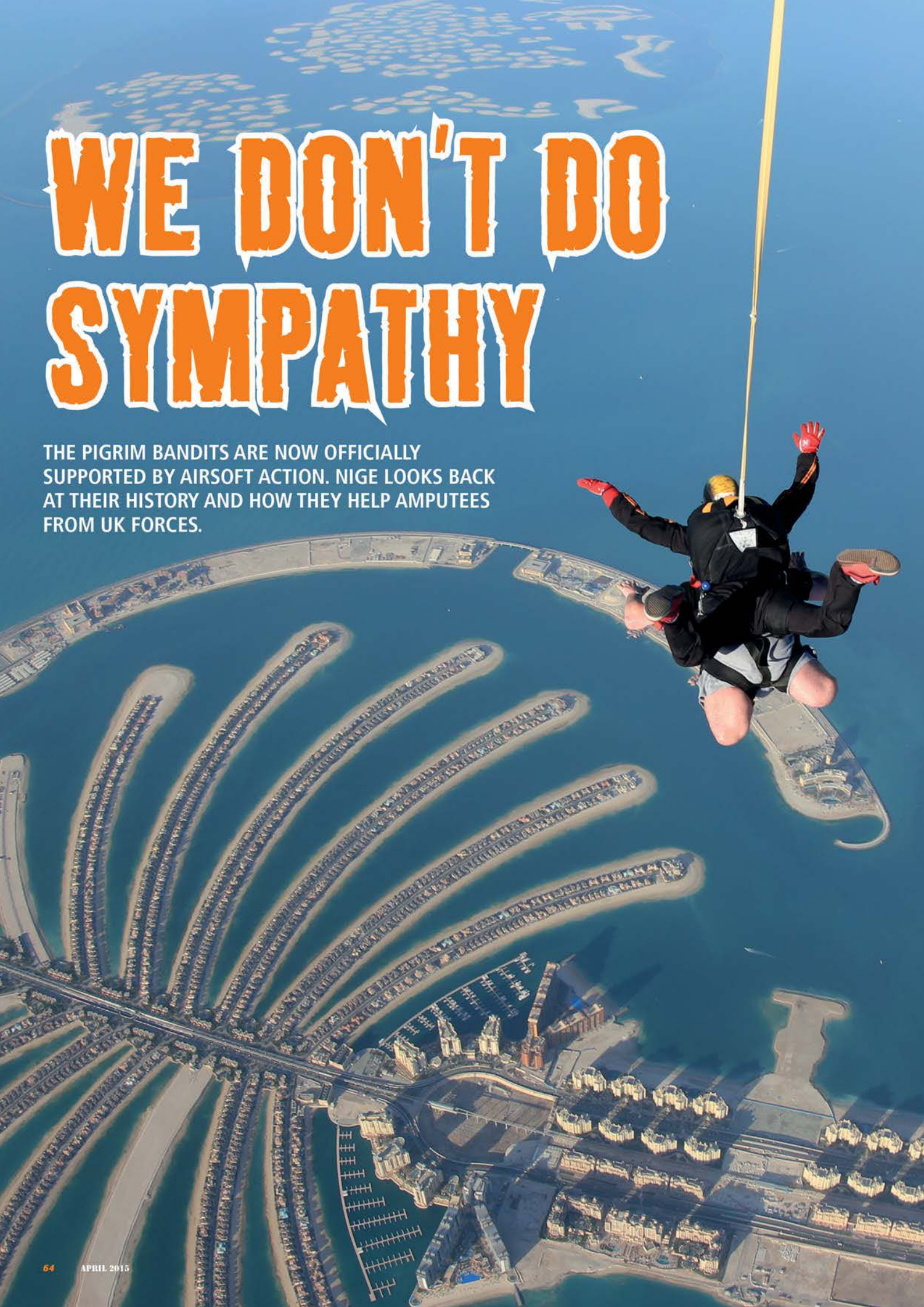


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WE DON'T DO SYMPATHY

THE PIGRIM BANDITS ARE NOW OFFICIALLY SUPPORTED BY AIRSOFT ACTION. NIGE LOOKS BACK AT THEIR HISTORY AND HOW THEY HELP AMPUTEES FROM UK FORCES.



"WE DON'T DO SYMPATHY. IT'S ALL ABOUT pushing the boundaries, as any member of the Regiment will remember from their Selection days it's about "always being able to go a little further" and that's what we try and get across to these injured servicemen" explained Mike, one of the founding members of the charity, Pilgrim Bandits.

The charity supports amputees from all UK forces using a "no sympathy" approach that pushes injured service personnel to their individual limits and it all started with a round of golf…

On one of their regular rounds of fund-raising golf in the New Forest, a group of ex-Special Forces members referring to themselves as "Pilgrims" (from their Regiment days) decided to add "Bandits" after being falsely accused of cheating during a competition. The group had been raising funds for local charities supporting amputees and veteran service personnel but wanted to create something tougher and more challenging, specifically for amputees returning from conflicts.

In 2010 the Pilgrim Bandits became a registered charity and Mike explained the charity's philosophy of "no sympathy": "Many [injured servicemen] didn't want to leave the life that they had chosen, yet because of their injuries they are forced to – and that in itself can lead to a lack of confidence. By taking them on adventure training expeditions where the conditions are similar to those in the Forces, they don't get any sympathy but instead they are pushed and their confidence in their ability to achieve slowly returns. This in turn then strengthens their self-belief which enables them to compete in events like the Para Olympics."



The Pilgrim Bandits raise funds through challenging members of the public to step into an unknown environment, challenge themselves and finally find out what they are really made of. The money raised is then channelled back into taking injured members on adventure and confidence building expeditions, for example by retracing WW2 missions like "Operation Frankton", where the lads followed the WW2 Cockleshell Heroes mission by kayaking over 90 miles up the Gironde river in France. They may be injured but the team believe that this is no reason for them to stop using the skills they acquired whilst serving. Pilgrim Bandits also work with schools and care homes to share the experiences of the amputees and prove that anything is possible.

I first became aware of the charity some years ago, when I stumbled upon their small gazebo at War and Peace and was immediately drawn to their no-nonsense attitude. I have never served with the military and would never put myself on a par with those that have – but I have undertaken a number of "challenges" that pushed me further than I thought I could go. The words "a little further" have a significance that resonated with me and I am absolutely delighted that Pilgrim Bandits have now become officially supported by *Airsoft Action*.

Following the warm reception and generosity they received at The British Airsoft Show, you are quite likely to see their stands and stalls appearing at future airsoft events and all I would ask is that you go and talk to them, listen to what they have to say and if you can drop a few coins in one of their collection tins, that would be brilliant.

"We are the Pilgrims, master; we shall go
Always a little further; it may be
Beyond that last blue mountain barred with snow
Across that angry or that glimmering sea."

"GO AS A PILGRIM AND SEEK OUT DANGER AND SEEK STIMULATION IN THE COMPANY OF THE BRAVE."

For more information about Pilgrim Bandits, visit their website: pilgrimbandits.org
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TIGER TIGER



THIS MONTH JERRY NOONE TAKES A WANDER DOWN HIS VERY OWN "AIRSOFT MEMORY LANE" TO BRING BACK TO LIFE ONE OF HIS OWN FAVOURITE LOADOUTS.

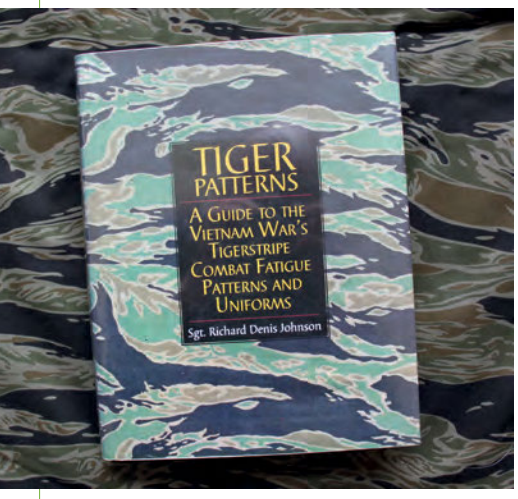
MANY, MANY MOONS AGO WHEN I FIRST discovered this funny old pastime we call "airsoft", like many I just went down the DPM road as a) I already had some, b) it was cheap enough to buy as army surplus, and c) it worked very well in the woods of good old Blighty. Of course, it was designed primarily for European usage and even now, with so many other camouflage patterns available, it still works effectively in its intended environment.

Soon, as is the way it goes, I hooked up with some other players from my area. We'd see each other at every monthly skirmish and inevitably end up playing alongside one another so it wasn't long before we decided to formalise things into a wee team. Once we'd made the decision to do this the next

step was looking for a new uniform that would give us an identity when we played together; I had long been a fan of the Vietnam War TV series "*Tour of Duty*" so of course I put up my hand and said "What about Tigerstripe?"

You have to remember that this was long before "Namsoft" really got into its swing, so Tigerstripe was still a pretty unusual pattern to see at skirmishes; in fact once we'd agreed to go with that as our team pattern I was tasked with sourcing it. I soon discovered that unlike other military surplus uniforms, genuine 'Nam era uniforms were very highly collectible and went for some serious amounts of money to collectors of such things.

I started to do some serious homework; luckily for me, around the time I started looking into things a new book was published in the USA by Shiffer Press. "Tiger Patterns" by Sgt Richard Denis Johnson is probably the definitive reference source for anything to do with genuine Tigerstripe variants and I do mean "variants". I have to admit I became a bit of a "tiger geek" when I received a copy of this fabulous book, learning to tell the difference between "John Wayne Dense", "Tadpole Sparse" and "Late War, Heavyweight Dense". Then of course you have the different cuts and pocketing; if anyone can tell me immediately what C1B-EXP-2P stands for I'll buy them an ice cream when I see them!



Most people will have an immediate connection with the family of Tigerstripe patterns due to its usage by Special Forces, SEALs, the ASAS, NZSAS, and the Ranger Recon teams in Vietnam but, in actual fact, it was already in military usage WAY before the Americans got involved with it. The Vietnamese Marine Corps were already playing with the "VMX Experimental" pattern in the late 1950's which is thought to have had a relationship with the French Indochina "Lizard" pattern, using as it did a virtually identical stripe configuration. The "VMX" in turn was developed into the first "official" Tigerstripe pattern, the Vietnamese Marine Corps Sparse or "VMS" which was issued from mid 1959 onwards.

See what I mean, this stuff can get seriously addictive! Personally it started me down a route that I enjoy immensely to this day; I'm involved in several groups that talk in depth about





camouflage patterns both historical and modern and it all started with Tigerstripe.

Finally I tracked some relatively cheap BDUs down in the USA and an order was placed for the team. Tiger was used with Olive US M56 Load Bearing Equipment in Vietnam so we made the decision to stay with this theme but use modern day equivalents in terms of our gear. Black boots and gloves were the order of the day, put together with copious amounts of cam cream; we thought we looked the "mutt's nuts" back in the day and recreating this "look" again now still shows how effective it can be during the summer months in the woodlands of the UK.

UNLOADED

Now, one of the things that I always stress is to work within a sensible budget as it's VERY easy to get carried away once you start thinking about your gear; some of us "old gits" have a little more disposable income for certain, but we also have mortgages to pay and families to look after so it's just as relevant to us as it is to someone just starting out. Think long and hard how much you're going to use a particular loadout and "cut your cloth" accordingly.

To that end I started out looking to a really good standard of kit but one which wasn't going to stretch the wallet. The first part of this was finding the basic uniform and a quick trawl online found me once again perusing the Military1st website. At £32.99 I was able to pick up a straightforward MFH "Vietnam" Ripstop Tigerstripe Shirt. The pattern itself is a little harsh compared with the real thing but the shirt has everything I really need from it; it's got a simple, no-nonsense button front closure with an over flap, four front pockets with button closure and button cuff adjusters. That's it, no muss no fuss. The matching trousers at £29.99 are equally as down to earth; they have a zip fly, two hand pockets, two back pockets with button flaps, two large cargo pockets on sides of the legs with button flaps, an adjustable waist with two tapes, Internal drawstring tie bottoms and belt loops. Both garments are made



from a sturdy 100% cotton ripstop fabric which isn't going to let you down anytime soon. My experience with reproductions like these is that the colours fade quite quickly, "silvering out" and becoming even more effective as they age.

In terms of boots, I kept things really cheap by going for a decent second hand pair of black issue High Leg boots; I picked these up online for under a tenner. They are good solid boots and whilst not Gore Tex lined, any decent leather boot is going to be waterproof if you look after it properly. Gloves were an easy choice as I found that the Armored Claw Shooter Tactical Gloves in Sage Green toned in well with the uniform; you'll find these reviewed fully in this months issue but at Euro12.10 a pair these are tremendous value! A simple scrim net and an OD ballcap pretty much nail the uniform.

So to kit! I thought back many years and considered what load bearing gear I first used with my Tigers; back in the day it had been the venerable South African Assault Vest in plain green. Actually, when I came to think of it, this had been a darn good vest which allowed me to carry all the kit I ever needed for a days skirmishing. The South African Assault Vest is an all round tactical vest with pockets of varying sizes to hold virtually all your airsoft kit. The best feature of the SAAV is the large hip pouch on left and right sides which will hold a whole array of different magazines; in fact they can be used as dump pockets, utility pouches, spares pouches or any combination of the three. The SAAV also has a long, thin dual compartment back pouch which can be used for carrying food, a hydration bladder, spare clothing, and a waterproof (just in case). For just £28.99 from Military 1st this is a lot of vest and I still know many players that swear by it as a design.

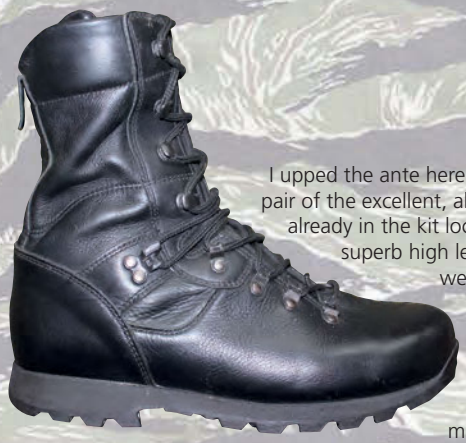
"MOST PEOPLE WILL HAVE AN IMMEDIATE CONNECTION WITH THE FAMILY OF TIGERSTRIPE PATTERNS DUE TO ITS USAGE BY SPECIAL FORCES, SEALS, THE ASAS, NZSAS, AND THE RANGER RECON TEAMS IN VIETNAM BUT, IN ACTUAL FACT, IT WAS ALREADY IN MILITARY USAGE WAY BEFORE THE AMERICANS GOT INVOLVED WITH IT."



LOADED

As I mentioned earlier I did end up becoming a bit of a "Tiger Fanboy", so of course I wanted to have a crack at something a bit more advanced. There is still no way in the world I would use a piece of genuine, 'Nam dated Tigerstripe to skirmish in (and I do own a couple of bits now!), but since Vietnam re-enactment and even "Namsoft" have become more popular there are a number of excellent reproductions out there.

Soldier of Fortune in Wales offer a really, really good reproduction of the "Tadpole Sparse" pattern, the shirt and Trouser set going for £79.99. This was one of the more popular patterns of Tiger Stripe used by the US troops in Vietnam. As I said, there were a lot of versions of Tiger Stripe camouflage used in Vietnam but this was the one favoured by the Special Forces and would have also been popular with Recon Teams too. The design of the suit is cut in the classic "Advisor" pattern and is made from 100% cotton which is absolutely bombproof. The jacket has one sleeve and two chest pockets which are closed by buttons which are exposed, whilst the trousers have seven pockets and are surprisingly advanced in their design even by modern standards. There are two front slash pockets, two rear seat bellowed shaped pockets, two cargo leg bellowed shaped pockets and one small boxed-shaped pocket below the cargo pocket on the left leg. All the buttons are exposed (there are no flaps covering the buttons) and there are a zipped fly and belt loops on the waist band. SOF also offer different styles of boonie hat and bandanas as well.



I upped the ante here in relation to footwear as I had a pair of the excellent, all leather "Sneekers" from Alt-Berg already in the kit locker. The Sneeker Microlite is a superb high leg, ultra lightweight tabbing boot, weighing in at just 630gms in a size 9. The boot has a comfortable Cambrelle® lining around the foot, heel and ankle, although the leg is left unlined. The boot uses a Tri-flex® 3 season midsole, which gives medium flex with excellent torsional resistance and support on rough ground. The upper is made from soft, supple, lightweight, water repellent 1.8mm Nappone leather which just moulds brilliantly to your foot and ankle in next to no time! Again, gloves were a bit more advanced here; I chose the Oakley SI Assault Gloves in Black. This is a model of glove that has been tried and tested by numerous armies worldwide, including the British. It's a great design, with a rugged micro-vented leather palm reinforced and carbon fibre knuckle protection. It uses premium leather and durable synthetics with flexible articulated construction, along with mesh zones and rubber exhaust ports for comfortable breathability. There's a clever surfacing on the palms and fingers for a secure grip and the overall fit is VERY positive. These still don't come cheap but you do get what you pay for; search around for these as they do regularly come up in "Sales"!

Having pushed the budget out a little already with this loadout I decided to keep the nylon gear affordable, and luckily VPER have released some little crackers in their new range! The lightweight Elite Carrier is designed on a minimal size to optimise mobility and reduce load weight; it still has a good acreage of MOLLE webbing panels, velcro ID panels, quick release buckles and adjustable padded shoulder straps. There are padded Ventex internal panels, front and rear armour compartments, and velcro outlet retainer straps to keep comms cords and hydration system tubes under control. It's made from 600D Cordura and the construction is very solid; best bit though is it's going to retail iro £39.95! I simply added ammo pouches, a hydration pouch, a VIPER Rigger Belt with Modular Holster and Dump Pouch and the loadout was "good to go".

Overall, as you can probably gather, I had a LOT of fun putting together two loadouts based on what was, and indeed is, one of the best jungle concealment patterns ever produced. It also took me back in time, not just with the nod to an historical camouflage pattern but to the guys I used to play with in my early airsoft days.

I'd like to sign off this moth by dedicating this article to my good friend Scott W, who sadly left us for the great skirmish site in the sky the year before last. He was a superbly sneaky player who was always the first to vanish into the undergrowth with his trusty L96 and also always the first to crack a joke when things got tough. We miss ya "Santa"!



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www.tactical-kit.co.uk
My Oakley SI gloves came from Tactical Kit; Oakley is only one of the great brands that they stock so do pay them a visit for tactical clothing, footwear, and equipment. Their service is friendly and first rate in every respect.

www.gunfire.pl
You'll see the new Armored Claw gloves profiled in Airsoft Action this month bot Poland based Gunfire offer so much more on their website. Do make sure to pay them a visit as they do ship internationally and their rates are VERY fair!

www.sofmilitary.co.uk
If you're in the market for anything military related whether it be in relation to re-enactment or for the very latest gear then Soldier of Fortune are always worth a look. They also attend virtually every militaria fair in the UK too so you can always catch up with them in that way too.

www.altberg.co.uk
Family company Alt-Berg have been making boots for the outdoor user and the military in Yorkshire for years. If you want to buy British and buy quality then please do go and have a look at what they do!

www.armex-airsoft.co.uk
My thanks to Armex, the UK distributor of the Umarex range of replicas for the loan of the excellent electric blowback G36K featured in the pictures this month. It's a super replica and well worth considering if you want a carbine that's just a bit different!

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TWENTY TWO INCH GUNS

IN OUR FIRST EVER AIRSOFT ACTION PLAYER PROFILE, LES LEE MEETS A GUY WHO IS AS BIG OFF THE FIELD AS HE IS ON IT – EVEN THOUGH HE IS KNOWN AS "BLACKHEART"!



TWENTY TWO INCH GUNS AT AN AIRSOFT SITE. Are you serious?

Okay, even though it was at Longmoor MoD Camp and not some sci-fi fictional facility or movie prop, I promise you these do actually exist - and no, I hadn't had milk with funny mushrooms for breakfast.

Back in late summer of last year, my mission (which I chose to accept) was to go and report on one of our most favoured and sought-after FIBUA sites; MoD training establishment Longmoor Camp. I attended the briefing as usual but was busy yakking with friends and comrades and before I knew it, we were heading out to The Village.

Five minutes after the game commenced, from my well selected OP and through the lens of my camera I saw this man. This man had guns… Big, very big guns! 22-inch biceps to be more precise and they were fixed to a torso of pure muscle mass and to top it off, a Mohawk-style haircut!

I had in fact just clapped eyes on Big Pete aka BLACKHEART.

Now from a photography point of view, this guy epitomises everything you could wish for at an Airsoft game, so hell yeah! I was gonna get some photos of this guy in action – but I wasn't really prepared for what followed. Not only did this guy take up a lot of real estate but his agility was perhaps underestimated by some as he was literally leaping through windows and doors like a gymnast with red ants in their pants and causing havoc in the process, as I saw many of his "kills" dragging their heels from buildings with their hands held high and their heads hung low. It's quite probable that Pete scared them to death, as I was later to find out that his preferred termination method is a knife kill.

Now being a former competitive bodybuilder for nearly 30 years myself, I know that if you get the gym work wrong, it will slow you down. Bodybuilding does just that, it builds muscle mass and if not combined with cardio vascular exercise,

a healthy balanced diet and a whole bunch of other fitness and agility related activities, then it's easy to emulate Mr Blobby at an all-you-can-eat restaurant. Not so with Big Pete and seeing (in this case) really was believing.

What did impress me was that Pete wasn't covered from head to foot in every bolt on accessory. He was getting the job done with minimal kit and his reason for this made perfect sense as will be revealed later in this biography.

During the lunch break, I introduced myself and we started chatting and it was then that I discovered what a genuinely nice guy Pete is and his passion and attitude for Airsoft was very refreshing. His glass is definitely half full, not only for Airsoft but for life in general. Such is his passion for Airsoft and his fellow players I had a reality check, as I found myself thinking "why can't everyone have this perspective and level of integrity" when it comes to what is, essentially, a fun day out with competition and a strong social scene.

Pete (aka Big Pete aka Blackheart), 33 from Enfield, North London "stumbled" into Airsoft after making the transition from Paintball when, some 3 1/2 years ago, he found himself driving past Pro Airsoft Supplies and like many of us, was drawn into the shop. After the initial dribbling period perusing the goodies on show, he was able to compose himself enough to start chatting to the staff and was enthused at the thought of such an advancement from his previous hobby (which had become quite stagnant in terms of improvement and its halted progression). So Pete found himself on the first rung of the Airsoft ladder and his first game day was, in his words, pants!

The site (which has since closed) offered nothing of interest for newbies but Pete, being a typical non-quitter (this comes from the Bodybuilding scene where quitting isn't an option and is underpinned by the statement "a quitter never wins and a winner never quits") persevered where some would have thrown in the towel. His next game took place at Red 1, where all his hopes and expectations became reality when he was welcomed by Jason the site owner and given every bit of help and support that he could have wished for.

Pete now plays at least once a month, at either Red 1 or with his team mates The Law, Red Reapers (sponsored by Red 1) and his junior team The Airsoft Pros, which is a team of younger players that Pete mentors and supports.

Pete, an avid Arsenal supporter, is a family man and has found that happy balance that we should all have in life. Having quit his job in the Metropolitan Police after 8 years service, he now runs his own business *HMSStrongarm*, specialising in burglar alarms, as he knows only too well how the bad guys operate. He started Bodybuilding some 19 years ago and to give you some idea, he is currently benching just under 200kg, so is it any wonder that his Friday nights out on "the rowdy bus", Policing the lively and sometimes dangerous streets of London were well supported and enhanced by time spent in the gym.

Before I add Pete's own interpretation of his perception of Airsoft, I would like to mention that his preference above all others is CQB, ideally a FIBUA site such as Longmoor MoD Camp where he can be found with guns a-blazing and (in his words) he likes woodland sites so that he "can take a nap"!

Pete is completely at home in a T shirt, combat pants, twin Desert Eagles and his Heavy Scar (not forgetting his rubber knife of course) with probably his TM Breacher slung over his shoulder. His primary reasoning for this is quite simple.... If he is hit then there is no mistake, as can be the case if a BB hits a cordura pouch on a heavily gear-laden player and said player genuinely doesn't realise he/she has been hit. An all too frequent unfortunate occurrence which can lead to misunderstanding and sometimes minor conflict.

"WE PRIDE OURSELVES ON BEING A MULTICULTURAL TEAM TO THE POINT THAT THERE ARE LESS DIFFERENT COLOURS IN A PACKET OF SMARTIES. BRITISH, EASTERN EUROPEAN, IRISH, SOUTH AMERICAN, ORIENTAL, ASIAN AND JUST ABOUT EVERY OTHER KIND OF PEOPLE. IN FACT, IF THERE WAS EVER AN ESKIMO WHO PLAYED, HE WOULD PLAY WITH US."

I asked Pete to offer up his history, perspective and ambition, which he was happy to do.

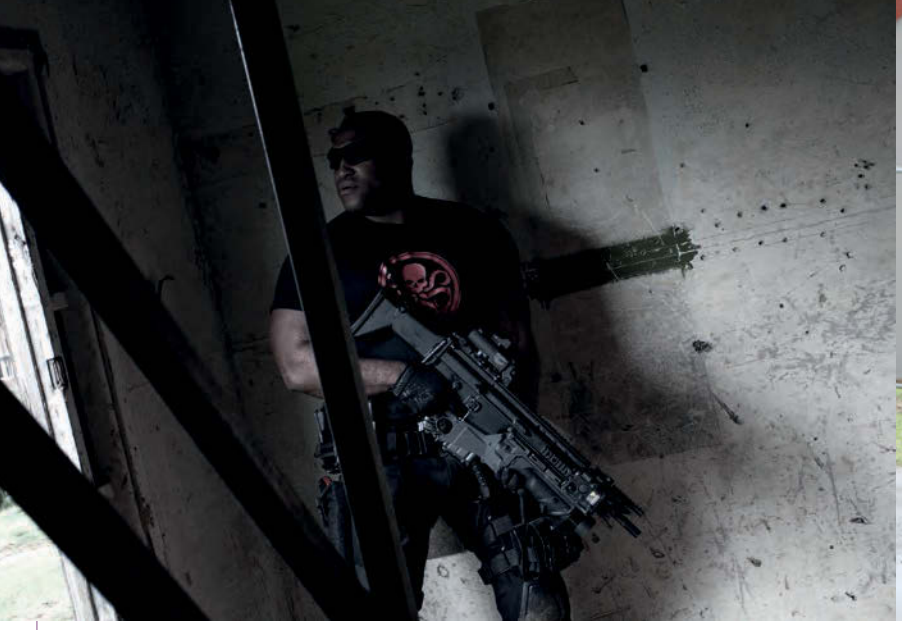
Les: How did you discover Airsoft?

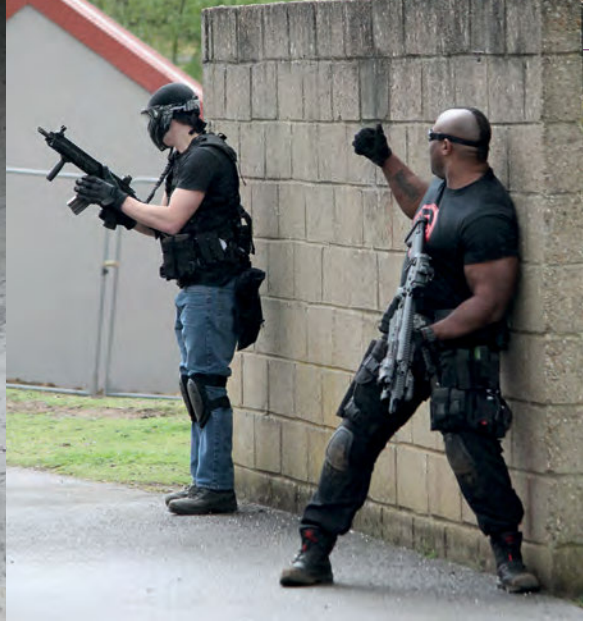
Pete: Well I think Airsoft actually found me. After leaving a very active career in England's Premier Police service, I started looking for other way to get a decent adrenaline rush. I had also stopped riding fast motorbikes so I could live to see 30. Between the speed of bikes and the brawling and excitement of law enforcement, I missed action so bad I could feel cobwebs growing inside my soul. A friend asked me to come Paintballing and I absolutely loved it (you can't blame me as I didn't know any better)! I didn't go very often as the price of ammo meant mugging old ladies on the way to skirmishes was the only way to make the affordability feasible. So this too got knocked on the head.

Then one day I was in Archway North London and drove past the well-known shop, Pro Airsoft Supplies. I went in and was completely bowled over with all these guns, big guns, heavy guns and very nearly real guns. I made a comment about owning bb guns when I was 13 or so and it was nice to plink targets but when they explained these were used for shooting people, an evil voice in my head whispered "this could be a legal way to inflict much pain on people". They spoke to me in depth for about 30 minutes and let me fire off a few RIFs and explained UKARA.

I didn't actually get to own a RIF or skirmish for 18 months as I was just too busy and chose to save up for a high end gun. Over this time, I did read a lot of magazines and watched YouTube videos nonstop. I slowly gathered bits of gear and my missus bought me the SCAR on my birthday (*Authors note* - THE PERFECT WIFE!) Eventually I met my friend Mick (aka The Crazy Russian/Mikes Crazy Customs). We spoke online at first before eventually heading to a woodland skirmish where







things took an interesting turn. I absolutely hated it! The action lacked, everyone cheated and even the marshals didn't know the games rules. Had it not been for bringing Mick in my car, I would have gone home at lunch. I was already regretting my £600 SCAR purchase and almost forgot about Airsoft altogether.

A couple of weeks later, I visited Red 1 Airsoft in St Albans. This is where I met the owner Jason Clarke. He is easily and without doubt the biggest influence on my Airsoft career and probably always will be. He asked me why I hadn't enjoyed my first skirmish and I explained why. He then suggested I visit his school site instead. The thought of being in conditions so close and cramped that you can stare into the eyes of your opponent as you attack him really appealed to me. Not only that but Jason's attitude and customer service is literally second to none.

Since meeting Jason, 99% of my gear arrives via him. He knows exactly what kind of stuff I like and keeps me in the loop regarding new gear and guns. He also advises on what's best for me and not what the rest of the scene is doing. Needless to say, since hitting the school I have never turned back. I play there 75% of the time and would recommend it to anyone who likes fast paced "balls to the wall" action. The site isn't just great because of the environment but more so because of how he runs it. He has a reputation for being an incredible site manager and as such I am looking forward to trying his new Woodland site in Bromley even though I'm not a fan of Woodland. Bring it on!



WHO I PLAY WITH

The first ever team to welcome me was Mick's called "The L.A.W." These guys are some of the most cool guys you can meet in the entire scene. We pride ourselves on being a multicultural team to the point that there are less different colours in a packet of Smarties. British, Eastern European, Irish, South American, Oriental, Asian and just about every other kind of people. In fact, if there was ever an Eskimo who played, he would play with us. We have a wide range of player type, guns and physical fitness levels. Together we like to win, but we don't take things too seriously as having fun on the day is the primary objective.

"I HEARD SOMEONE MAKE A JOKE ONCE THAT I WAS BITTEN BY A ZOMBIE AND 15 MINUTES LATER THE ZOMBIE TURNED BACK INTO A HUMAN."

At Red 1, the banter is second to none. In fact sometimes the banter starts a week in advance on the Red 1 Facebook group so there are plenty of scores to settle on any given Sunday. It's like a family there as everyone gets along and helps each other out. Here I join *The Airsoft Pros* who are a predominantly teenage team. Some may assume this is a disadvantage but they all know what they are doing and are more capable than most adults. Their enthusiasm for the sport is admirable and their natural fitness levels mean they make some of us older guys look slow and grumpy. This team probably has some of the coolest codenames I've ever heard including, Honeysuckle, Karma, BullShit and Crackers. Top lads!

The final group I have joined very recently is *The Red Reapers*. I did not know most of these well before playing and joining them but the more serious nature of the group allows me to have a more intense outlet. These guys are your stone cold killers. They like to practice and play with real purpose. Winning competitions and travelling far and wide in the aim but still, we have lots of fun.

ME AND MY ATTITUDE TO AIRSOFT

My motto with Airsoft is two, simple words: "Honour" and "Spite". They sound like contrasting words but in the way I use them they are not. In basic terms, play fair and play hard. In the same way I want others to play by the rules, I also want others to shoot me in the back instead of using the fairy "Bang" rule. Lighting up and getting lit are both essential and equal parts of the game. Essentially this is where the name "Blackheart" comes from, for being a heartless bastard. Stuff your bang rule. Expect point blank kills and thrills when I'm around.

Within the Airsoft community, I tend not to follow trends or try to fit in. In fact I know to a degree I stick out a bit and I haven't got a problem with that. Some have said that I am an iconic face in the sport but to be honest, I'm just another guy with another gun. I do tend to get a few stares and "Oh Shit" moments from people but its more funny to me and not annoying.

On any given game day I do tend to find I'm a plastic magnet as the opposite team sometimes seek me out but this makes things more fun for me. After all, the more people lined up in front of the Grenade Launcher the better. More meat for the grinder. Some say I have a reputation for being "hard boiled" and "hard to kill", despite still only needing one bb to be killed same as everyone else. I heard someone make a joke once that I was bitten by a Zombie and 15 minutes later the Zombie turned back into a human.

MY PLAYING STYLE

Contrary to common belief I am actually quite a fast runner. Looks can be deceiving so people are quite surprised when they see me sprinting or literally diving through the air guns blazing. Generally in a CQB or FIBUA environment, I like a deliberate but cautious approach but constantly pushing forwards even in defence. The variant of gear I carry means I am very dynamic and have the upper hand in most situations, even when outnumbered. I wouldn't advise as much gear as I carry to others as it would bog them down quite quickly. I also deliberately don't wear any upper body gear. I only play with a t-shirt (even in winter). This guarantees that I can feel 99% of hits, keeping me as honest as possible.

Les: Thanks Pete! And there we have it. I have never had the desire to compile a "player profile" before but hand on heart, Big Pete is a refreshing inspiration to so many. His endearing nature is a true reflection of his passion for all he does and he is probably the finest example of how Airsoft should be enjoyed for all its positivity that it can bring. He is respected by so many, he is overwhelmingly admired by the majority of our younger players and he is pro-active in encouraging our young guns to play with discipline, integrity and honour and is a great ambassador for our sport in so many ways.

And who says size doesn't matter!

Les OUT!

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GLOCK WORK

CHAMPIONSHIP SHOOTER, MARK HURDING, HAS ALWAYS HAD A SOFT SPOT FOR GLOCK PISTOLS SO TAKES A LOOK AT THE WE GEN 4 GLOCK 17 AND 34.

I'VE ALWAYS HAD A THING FOR GLOCKS. I've shot real Glock 17s abroad in 9mm and always thought they were a very good pistol, even for IPSC shooting. Although HK introduced a polymer-framed pistol a good 12 years before them, it was Glock that brought huge commercial success for the "plastic gun".

Developed in Austria in 1980 as part of a bid to supply the Austrian military with a new side arm (to replace their aging Walther P38, which had been in use since WWII), the Glock 17 was adopted by both Austrian Military and police services in 1982. Its revolutionary polymer frame made it both durable and cost effective. Today Glock pistols account for over 65% of all handguns in the US (both military and civilian) and are used extensively by military and law enforcement agencies around the world. There are presently 26 Glock variants available, in various frame and calibre combinations ranging including 9mm, 10mm, .357 and .45!

To ensure their dominance in the civilian market "Team Glock", the sports division of the Company, recruited World Champion Action Pistol shooter, KC Eusebio and Glock Custom Shop, ZEV Technologies, to its ranks and watched in awe as the trophies and world records began to pile up. It's akin to Mercedes working with AMG and then hiring Lewis Hamilton as their No.1 driver!

In recent years Team Glock has dominated the USPSA and Steel Challenge competitions throughout the US, with a little help from ZEV that takes a $600 pistol you can buy in Wal-Mart and turns it into a $2000 race-pistol! Indeed, there truly is a Glock pistol for everyone - and every occasion.

It seems a great shame then, that the airsoft versions of Glock pistols were never going to be good enough to use in AIPSC competition… or were they?

Many, many years ago I got my hands on a WE Hi Kappa. Oh dear, what a shocker! This very cheap gun seemed to be an exact copy of the awesome TM 5.1 Hi Cappa, it looked very similar but you only had to pick it up and shoot it to realise that's where the similarity ends! So, when looking for product to add to the Action Air UK catalogue, why on earth would I be interested in a WE Glock? My supplier explained that WE have improved their product beyond recognition in recent years and particularly the Sigs, M&Ps and the Gen 4 Glocks. "Here" he said, "take a Gen 4 Glock 17 and a Glock 34 and give them a try, I promise you won't be disappointed!" Bold words indeed I thought, besides I've never been one to look a gift horse in the mouth, so I accepted his kind offer and took one of each home for a test!

Ok, look, if I'm being totally honest with you my expectations weren't that high but the box was very nice though!

Upon opening the aforementioned excellent box I found the pistol, two interchangeable back straps, a magazine, manual and an extra pin for the wider back strap and a steel pin for knocking it out/in.

When I picked up the Gen 4 Glock for the first time it

felt, heavy, solid and well put together, the immediate and most obvious difference between this and its Tokyo Marui counterpart is the inclusion of a metal slide, Tokyo Marui pistols come with plastic slides.

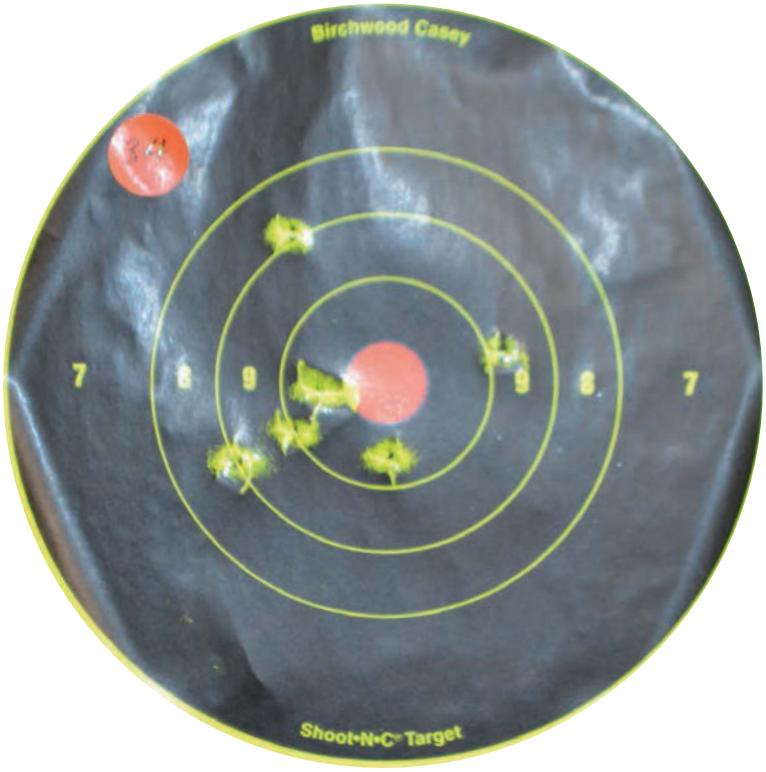
I didn't bother spraying any silicon lube in to the gun nor did I adjust it in any way, I simply filled the magazine to capacity with Arms green gas and some precision 25g bbs I had in the stock cupboard and put up a "shoot n see" target and shot the gun, free style from 6m... Oh my! That was fun! OK, let's give it another go and another and another! With my ever-widening smile I decided to give the G34 a go, using the same gas and ammo from the exact same firing position. Wow! These little guns are not too shabby at all, I thought!

Now I was interested and I was keen to discover more about these WE Gen 4 Glocks and see what else they could do. Firstly, I grabbed one of the two additional back straps - they are marked M & L (medium and large), opting for the large back strap for the G17 and this, to me, felt instantly more comfortable in my hand. I don't like to have to grip a gun too tightly as the tension in your arms can tend to make you pull your shots, especially if you are shooting a 12 stage AIPSC Competition. The large back-strap enabled me to position the gun very well in my hand and this good fit made for a very natural and comfortable shooting position which in turn, allowed for a far speedier sight acquisition - much quicker in fact! Also the bright white dots on the sights are very clear and make it very easy to acquire the targets quickly.

I continued to shoot both guns for the afternoon and was very impressed. Crisp blow back action, with some good grouping, I shot from 6m with good grouping and from 12m where again, all shots managed to hit the 6 inch diameter "Shoot N See" target. I also shot both pistols quickly, the way







I would shoot in a competition and considering these pistols have had no work done whatsoever, I was again very impressed and it was at this point that it suddenly occurred to me to ponder the question: Could I use a gas powered Glock in an AIPSC competition?

I decided to see what I could do there and then. I started by stripping the gun down and giving it a good spray with silicon lube, then I looked at the barrel. It turns out that the barrels on the Glocks (and the Sigs and possible some others too such as the Beretta 92 and the M&P but I will confirm this in future additions) are the same design as those used on the TM Hi cappa range, so I grabbed a 4" barrel and a Nine Ball Hop rubber and installed them into the G17. I decided it would be an interesting exercise to compare groupings between the standard barrel and an uprated 6.01 barrel, so I put 8 shots down range from 6m with the original parts, then a further 8 shots on a clean target with the uprated barrel and hop rubber installed, photographing each target in turn.

If you look at the two photographs I think the results speak for themselves, the AAUK 6.01 barrel gives clearly tighter groupings. It was at this stage that I decided that I would set myself a goal, a project to see if I could take two relatively inexpensive gas powered pistols and turn them into competition guns, guns that I would be happy to compete with; a gas-powered Glock race pistol that was on par with the Marui Hi Cappa!

I've seen real steel custom Glocks from SAI & Zev and they look amazing, so I set about looking for aftermarket parts for my new acquisitions and as it turns out Ace 1 Arms in Hong Kong do a whole range of slides and upgrade kits for the

"I SHOT BOTH PISTOLS QUICKLY, THE WAY I WOULD SHOOT IN A COMPETITION AND CONSIDERING THESE PISTOLS HAVE HAD NO WORK DONE WHATSOEVER, I WAS AGAIN VERY IMPRESSED."

Glocks and the M&P (which I will be having a look at in a future issue). I contacted them and asked if they would be willing to send me a sample kit which they said they would send it out to me after the Chinese New Year holiday, so when it arrives I'll stick it on and see how it looks and performs.

The next day a spent about 2 hours stippling the grip on the G17. If you are in the field, its damp and you are wearing gloves, there's no way this gun is going to slip out of your hand! Installing the 6.01 barrel and hop rubber upgrade plus stippling the grip has made great improvements to this already great side arm and I think skirmishers would be more that pleased, especially when the gun in its basic form is available at £95!

I will bring you regular updates of the evolution of my Glock "race" guns in future additions

BRITISH SHOOTING SHOW

I spent Valentines weekend (thank you for the pass darling!) at the British Shooting show as an invited guest of our editor at ***Airsoft Action*** magazine. I was there to display the new range of VCR compliant AIPSC pistols as well as some other interesting pistols for Competition shooter and Skirmisher. The colourful anodised Marui Hi Cappas generated a lot of interest and it was all very positive. I was particularly glad to meet several "old boys" who used to shoot real steel Practical Pistol in the UK back in the day, they were very keen to get hold of the pistols and expressed a great desire to return to the sport they had so harshly taken away from them.

The show itself seemed less busy this year than in previous and I fear this maybe due to the shows new organisers having less interest in Airsoft then their predecessors - that and the fact that they have increased the price of a stand by over 50%. I may be totally wrong but I get the feeling that there will be a very small airsoft section in coming years if at all at the BSS.

But fear not! There is a new airsoft show on the horizon! "The British Airsoft Showcase" is to be held at the Mall in Reading on the 17th May, hosted by our very good friends at RedWolf Airsoft UK and every type of shooting with Airsoft guns will be represented with displays, presentations and pay and play stands along with retailers and private sellers from across the land.

See you there!

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SWAT TACTICS

PRO-TACT TRAINING'S ANDY NIGHTINGALE STARTS A SERIES OF TRAINING PROGRAMS BASED ON METHODS USED BY REAL-WORLD OPERATORS

OVER THE NEXT FEW ISSUES I AM GOING to introduce you to a series of SWAT Training programs, used by some of the world's most elite Law Enforcement agencies and paramilitary organisations.

"SWAT", or Special Weapons and Tactics, are nothing new and are forever developing as equipment and technology advances. Weapon systems change as does the ammunition that is used. Personal equipment has taken on a new form, with more advanced materials and design. But can we really train and enjoy the thrill of real world training programs with airsoft guns and equipment the same way that those we imitate do? Yes. Yes we can - to some degree.



We won't be able to run all those drill that save us from double feeds or stove pipes in our weapons systems, (please let me know if anyone with an AEG gets a shooter-induced stoppage) but we can pretty much run with most of the training, especially the tactics side of things that us Airsofters pay our money for. In fact, many Law Enforcement agencies and military organisations use Airsoft as a cheap and safe way to train officers and operators in the use of firearms manipulation and fundamentals, as well as running through new tactical training drills. The development of airsoft guns has come along way from its beginnings and has developed, not only into a fantastic gaming pastime but as a professional training tool.

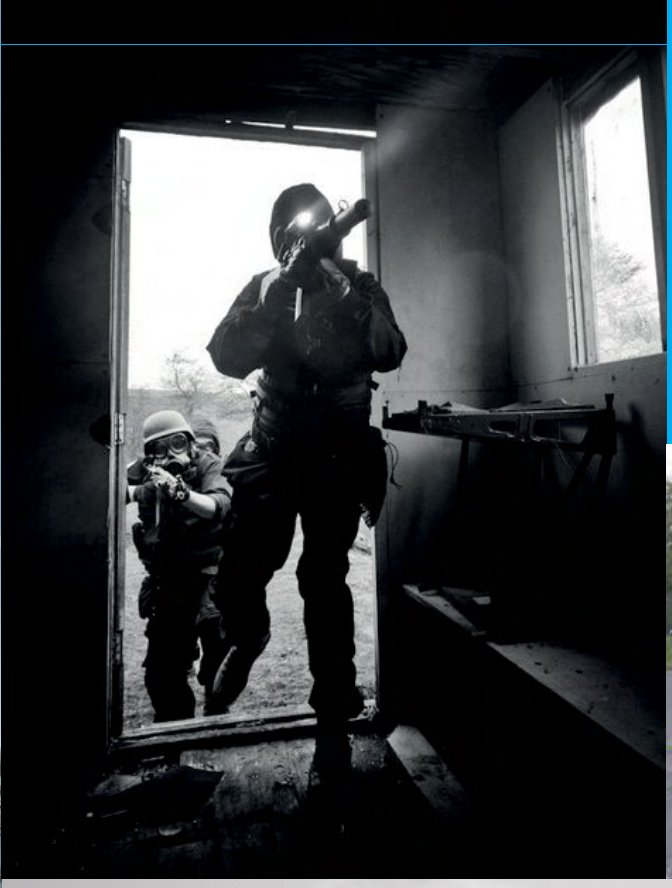
So what is going to be in the training program, I hear you ask?

Well I want to start, as I should, right at the very beginning.

First off we need to set up a team. Your individual team members should all be enthusiastic and want to commit to the team and be able to put in the time and effort that is required to become successful. This is a standard requirement for all SWAT team members out in the real world. Real operators have to apply for a chance to attend a selection course and only if they pass selection are they offered a chance to train as a SWAT operator. If they pass this phase then they are accepted into the team as a "Rookie" and the real training begins.

So we need to make sure that all the team members can commit as much time to training as possible. Do remember that this is just a pastime and that we all have family commitments and work, or most of us do and that one person's cash flow may not be as free as others in the team, so do make allowances. The minimum number of operators to be in with

"IN MODERN TIMES THESE UNIFORMS ARE COMMON AND NO LONGER POSE SUCH A VISUAL THREAT. DON'T GET ME WRONG I WOULD STILL BE WORRIED IF I SAW SEVERAL BLACK-CLAD CHAPS CLIMBING THROUGH MY WINDOW WITH GUNS DURING THE NIGHT!"



"WEAPON CHOICE IS YOURS ALONE – BUT PLEASE DON'T GO ALL OUT WITH A M249 AT CLOSE QUARTERS WHILST ROOM CLEARING! WE WANT TO TRAIN AS THE REAL CHAPS DO."





any chance of team survival is four. Any less than 4 members is not workable. The most you have on a team is entirely up to the team and its logistics. The more members you have, the better the chances of a mission success.

Now you have your team members you will need a name. I will leave that up to you (personally I'm not a fan of using a real world names, regiments, badges, or logos out of respect) but make it one that is easy for your adversaries to remember. Once that is done you will want to choose a load out for your team and this is where the wallets start to tighten up. As I mentioned before not all of us are Donald Trump (a very rich guy for you who don't know who he is) so it is very important that you get the look you want and that everyone can afford.

Does it have to be black? No. Black kit was used way back in the early seventies by certain SWAT and Hostage Rescue Teams to intimidate their adversaries during an assault. These black clad worriers had never been seen before and resembled silent ninja-type warriors swooping in for the kill. A very well-thought out psychological and intimidating tactic. Now in modern times these uniforms are common and no longer pose such a visual threat. Don't get me wrong I would still be worried if I saw several black clad chaps climbing through my window with guns during the night!

So what type of load out is suitable and what works? Well pretty much anything works so long as it gives you ease of movement, is strong enough for the job and identifies you as a team player. If the team is new to airsoft then the world of choice is a free one. If you have all been playing for some time have a look at what everyone is wearing and go with the majority (this will help with the pennies). Load outs don't have to be all the same colour. The team I train with use PTP pants and black tops and the previous team I trained wore green coveralls and DPM vests and armour. So it s up to you what type or style of load out you go for.

When looking for vests my suggestion would be to go for the Mollie type and not the type with pouches sewn onto the vest itself. This vest can be tailored to the needs of the wearer. At times you may be in an overwatch position and need to carry only a set of binoculars, range finder and Sniper rifle, so you will be needing pouches on the vest capable of carrying such items. Other times you may be part of the entry team that is carrying a close quarter's weapon system such as an MP5. Security detail requires you carry a mid range weapon such as an AR type. The Mollie type vest enables you to tailor your vest to fit the job you are tasked with by replacing and swapping pouches rather than purchasing several different vests for several different jobs - just try fitting M4 magazines into an MP5 pouch.





As for weapons I am going to leave that up to you. The reason for this is that we all have our favourites and would hate to part with them just for the sake of a certain look. (Or you could purchase a new one but don't tell the wife). However if new weapons are an option, consider what job role you are most likely to be doing (more on this topic in future issues). For instance, entry teams would need to go for a short range weapon such as a MP5, MP7, or Uzi - any weapon with a small calibre and low velocity. Security details may opt for the M or AR platforms revolving around the 5.56mm calibre; overwatch may want a SAW and Snipers a larger calibre weapon, such as a bolt-action or semi-automatic sniper rifle of 7.62mm calibre and above.

As we all know the only calibre available to us is the humble 6mm (or 8mm in some cases). It's not going to make much difference to the ballistics in airsoft but, as with a lot of things in Airsoft, it's all about "the look". Weapon choice is yours alone - but please don't go all out with a M249 at close quarters whilst room clearing! We want to train as the real chaps do.

So now you have your team members, decided on your load out or look, have yourself a team name and badge or logo, decided on your basic weaponry, now you are ready to start training.

In the next issue I will explain the different roles played by SWAT operators and organisation. I will keep all training plans to a four-operator team for ease of explanation but if you have more than four in a team, these extra bodies will play the role of either security or entry team members.

Keep safe and happy shooting.


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TANKS OF TERROR

DAN MILLS WRITES ABOUT ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS ON THE BATTLEFIELDS OF WORLD WAR ONE AS HE LOOKS AT THE FIRST USE OF TANKS ON THE WESTERN FRONT

AS THE STALEMATE CONTINUED ALONG THE long trench lines many ideas were put forward, some good and some bad, on how to achieve a breakthrough that would somehow give an advantage to one side. Tanks were developed as one such idea.

The first prototypes were constructed by William Foster & Co in Great Britain, appearing in August and September 1915, nicknamed "Little Willy", a disparaging remark made about the size of the gun mounted inside the turret! Or was it the Kaiser? Little Willy led to the Mark One tank, which was demonstrated to the army in February 1916.



Though officially they were termed "Landships", factory workers called them "Tanks" after the similarities between steel water tanks and the latest war machinery. It is also said that to help keep the new weapon as a secret for as long as possible, they were designated on paperwork as cold water storage tanks.

Whilst the British led the design of the Tank, the French soon followed and built more than any other nation in the war, whilst the German side took to designing anti-tank weapons instead. Strange then, that by the time of World War Two it was Germany who had the best designed tanks - and better anti-tank weapons!

"CHAIN MAIL FACE MASKS, GOGGLES AND HELMETS WERE WORN TO DEFEND AGAINST FLYING SHRAPNEL AND SPLINTERS, WHICH WOULD BURST OFF FROM EACH IMPACT ON THE INNER SKIN OF THE TANK'S PLATES."

The first tank trials in combat took place during part of the Somme offensive, when forty nine of them were lined up and sent trundling towards the German front lines in the Battle of Flers-Courcellete. Of the 49, only thirty two were deemed reliable, with only nine getting through No Man's Land.

What a horrendous and frightening sight these iron beasts must have made to the German defenders on first sight as they tore through the barbed wire and crushed their comrades in their trench positions.

Initial speeds were travelling at a walking pace, which was good when combined with supporting infantry but bad for targeting. Conditions inside were not nice at all; temperatures would be around the fifty degrees mark, boiling, in particular for the crew nearest the engine contained inside without immediate access to air when battened down. Chain mail face masks, goggles and helmets were worn to defend against flying shrapnel and splinters, which would burst off from each impact on the inner skin of the tank's plates. There was also a significant danger from the fumes, poison carbon monoxide from the engine and cordite from the weapons. These conditions would often lead to the crew losing consciousness.

At first side armour was only 8mm thick, this led to a danger from side attack once known to the enemy. Continuous development was required until a medium was reached that would provide suitable protection whilst still being able to move across the battlefield. Due to the type of obstacles along the front and the nature of the warfare, the landscape was potted with craters of all sizes from mines to artillery shell holes and large barbed wire entanglements, all had to be carefully negotiated.

The tanks had many reliability problems, with many commanders thinking they were more hassle than they were worth but when they did work, they proved their value. High level commanders though were either for or against and this

led to a poor take up initially. There was a reluctance to accept the tanks use instead of horses as cavalry, as this was a hard pill to swallow for the proud cavalrymen, especially to be replaced by a hunk of steel plate.

Though, whilst horses were slowly relegated to support tasks, the tank was redesigned and altered as each trial took place. The Mark Four was a capable, battle-winning machine, effective over one of the most difficult types of terrain ever and they could cross over a trench or gap of some 9 feet and drive through barbed wire.

A method of carrying Fascines, still in practise today, was used to aid in the crossing of deep obstacles. Each vehicle would carry several fascines, usually logs or something of a similar type, lashed together, these would be rolled off the top deck down into the obstacle to fill the gap, thereby enabling the tank to drive over the obstacle.

One method to attack the armoured beasts though was by indirect fire delivered munitions, mortars and artillery would be called down onto thinner armour on the topside.

Following the invention of the Tank came The Tank Corps. Initially named as the "Heavy Section of the Machine Gun Corps", through expansion into Tank Battalions, finally formed as a unit in its own right, with its own cap badge, by Royal Warrant in July 1917 and continues today as the Royal Armoured Corps. The unit wears a tactical recognition flash of brown, red then green on its sleeve, the meaning of which goes back to those dark days of the Great War, where the tanks were said to have travelled "from mud (brown), through blood (red), to the green fields beyond". The prefix of "Royal" was added after the war along with the adoption of the black beret.

The first real successful use of the tank was in November 1917 at the Battle of Cambrai. They broke through the German lines but were so surprised and with little co-ordination they never really exploited the situation. In an ironic situation it was the horse cavalry that had been tasked to provide the follow up to the tank attack.

Cambrai was the first use of combined operations, therefore the success of the attack was not purely due to the inclusion of the tank alone. Tanks with infantry support, predicted artillery bombardments and air support, all combined instead of piece-meal led to the success of the day, though it was noted that exploitation was missed and the German counter attacks were to their normal fast, hard, aggressive standard, quickly consolidating.

Tank names and designs came and went; the Whippet, Big Willy, Mark 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, Male, Female, all would have a brief appearance before slipping away into obscurity having being replaced by a newer model. One Major General remarked: *"The tank was a freak. The circumstances which called it into existence were exceptional and not likely to recur. If they do, they can be dealt with by other means"*. What did he know? Years later the tank is still a familiar sight on the battlefield and looks to be that way for the duration.



"Male" tanks were so named because they had a large gun of some description and "Females" due to only being fitted with machine guns. These types were sent into battle in mixed groups to complement each other and face the different threats encountered. Males were generally fitted with two 6 pounder guns for the main armament, along with a wine rack full of 332 rounds and a secondary armament of 3 Lewis MG's. The Female variants were usually fitted with 5 Lewis Machine Guns.

"THERE WAS A RELUCTANCE TO ACCEPT THE TANKS USE INSTEAD OF HORSES AS CAVALRY, AS THIS WAS A HARD PILL TO SWALLOW FOR THE PROUD CAVALRYMEN, ESPECIALLY TO BE REPLACED BY A HUNK OF STEEL PLATE."

The Mark 4 Male weighed 29 tonnes, the Female slightly less. Its engines were built by Daimler – Foster, 16 litre petrol with gears, 2 forwards and 1 reverse. The operational range was only 35 miles, carried 70 gallons travelling at a speed of 4mph.

The first tank on tank engagement happened unexpectedly on the 24th of April 1918 at a village called Villers-Bretonneux, where three German Mark 7s took on Three British Mark 4s. Between them and the attacking British and Empire troops they forced the Germans to retire.



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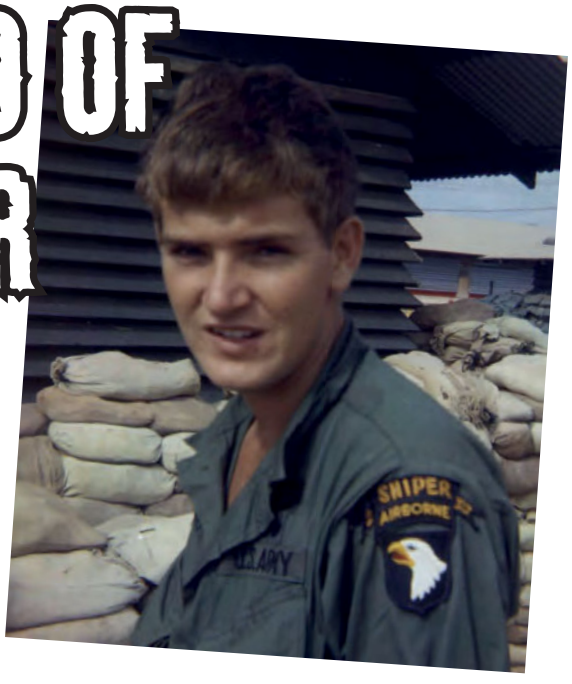
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SNIPER ONE, DAN MILLS, WRITES ABOUT A MAN WHO HELD THE RECORD FOR MOST KILLS, UNTIL IT WAS BEATEN BY CHRIS KYLE

THE UNSUNG HERO OF THE VIETNAM WAR



MOST PEOPLE NOWADAYS, WHEN TALKING about American Snipers immediately think of Chris Kyle, who currently holds the top position of 160 confirmed kills and is the subject of the recent film "American Sniper" (and who will later be a subject for this sniper series). Up until then it was Carlos Hathcock and his tally of 93 that was on everybody's lips but little known is about Adelbert "Bert" Waldron, with 109 kills.

Until Chris beat his tally back in the Iraq War, Bert had held the record of America's most prolific sniper since his fighting in the Vietnam War but, for some reason it was Carlos who held the limelight and seeing as I have already written an article about Carlos, I think it only right that you get to read about Bert too!

Adelbert Waldron was born into a humble family in 1933, in Syracruse in New York State and grew up in a quiet little place called Baldwinsville, a little way further North West. Like many of the great shooters I have written about, Bert spent the days of his childhood out hunting in the wilds, growing up with a gun in his hands, especially after (whilst still very young) his parents got divorced. This was something that would haunt him for life, deeply upsetting him and making him feel lonely. To help forget he hunted in the forests.

This pattern of life continued until Bert decided it was time for a change of scenery and promptly joined the US Navy in 1956, where he would serve for twelve years. Almost as sudden he changed his scenery again by transferring into the Army in 1968. He was sent for training to Fort Benning in Georgia, on 14th May and by November the same year was promoted to Sergeant and sent to South Vietnam, where he would make his mark on the world.

Newly posted to Company B, 3rd Battalion of the 60th Infantry Regiment, 9th Infantry Division, based in the Mekong Delta, Bert found himself up against a most determined foe. Posted to one of the most dangerous sectors in Nam, where greater numbers of enemy were in strength and almost daily American soldiers were losing their lives.

After his arrival Bert underwent an "in theatre" course







where he studied the environment (amongst other subjects) and, in particular, the M21 semi-automatic rifle. After just 18 days of instruction Bert, who had shown himself to be an excellent shot and his fellow students were sent into their respective platoons to conduct operations.

Most snipers in Vietnam (and other conflicts too) were shown to have used "scoped", bolt action rifles. Bert and his fellow Shooters were using an upgraded version of the standard M14 semi–auto rifle, designated the M21 and for use by selected Sharpshooters. The M21 was fitted with an ART (Adjustable Ranging Telescope) x3 – x9 optic sight that could calculate accurately distances over 800 metres, firing standard NATO 7.62mm rounds. For night time shooting, including ambushes, it could be fitted with a Starlight NV scope and a suppressor.

In only eight months of operations in Vietnam, during 1968 into 1969, Bert had shot dead 109 enemy insurgents and some of his shots were legendary at the time.

The operational area of the 9th Division included the vast Mekong River and the MRF (Mobile Riverine Force) were responsible for patrolling it, to deny it to the enemy. In one incident whilst travelling down the river in a Tango Patrol Boat, the crew were sniped at from a distance of approximately 900m. Whilst chaos reigned all around him Bert calmly observed for the enemy sniper, located him camouflaged within the top of a palm tree, set his rifle and killed him with one shot - from a moving boat platform!

During another engagement he found himself in close proximity to the enemy at a Dam intersection, North East of a place called Ben Tre, Bert shot eight rounds - shooting eight Viet Cong dead, all of whom were travelling in a moving truck… At night… From over 500m!

It had started earlier with a suspicious VC soldier becoming alarmed at the general area where Bert and his observer were lying in ambush amongst some trees. Wanting to flush out whatever had caused the soldier's sense of alarm, a fire control order was sent and the VC hoped to bomb out whatever it was he thought lay in hiding. However the order was refused higher up due to the location of civilians. For his trouble Bert shot the VC dead before turning back to bigger targets, a convoy that passed by later that night at 8.40pm.

The road passed Bert approximately 500 m in front of his fire position, the trucks in the convoy had open backs, Bert sighted and opened fire on a truck with 16 insurgents on the back, killing eight of them. One shot one kill!

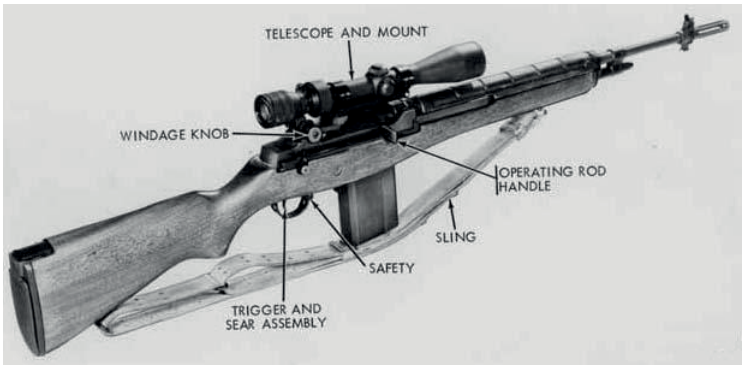
The Viet Cong soon switched on to the fact that a shooter of some considerable expertise was operating in the area. Bert Waldron had been using the codename "Daniel Boone", a famous frontiersman. They soon put a bounty of $50k on the head of one "Daniel Boone" advertised to be paid on delivery.

A possible morale failure in the ranks or publicity coup (should he be captured or killed) was averted on the 21st July 69 when SSGT A



"DURING ANOTHER ENGAGEMENT HE FOUND HIMSELF IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE ENEMY AT A DAM INTERSECTION, NORTH EAST OF A PLACE CALLED BEN TRE, BERT SHOT EIGHT ROUNDS – SHOOTING EIGHT VIET CONG DEAD, ALL OF WHOM WERE TRAVELLING IN A MOVING TRUCK... AT NIGHT... FROM OVER 500M!"







F Waldron was returned home after cutting his tour short to eight months, the normal length was a year. Bert went back to the states where he taught the next batch of shooters in marksmanship skills at Fort Benning, back where it had all started.

After his somewhat adrenalin rushed experience he found it extremely hard to adapt back into a normal routine and shortly after arriving back on posting to Georgia Bert Waldron retired himself out of the army. It was March 1970, a new decade had begun and one that would see the Vietnam War spread through its years.

Bert had become interested in a weapons manufacturing company which made some of the equipment he had used back in Nam and for a while worked with them. During the 1980s and on until his death in April 1995, Bert found life more and more troublesome. Since his return to civilian life from Vietnam he had never really fitted back in, his twenty-year marriage to his wife had broken down and he drifted from job to job, including becoming a mercenary and getting married twice more. At the time of his death he died in complete anonymity, never achieving any real recognition despite being the holder of considerable military awards.

Staff Sergeant Adelbert "Bert" Waldron was awarded Two Distinguished Service Crosses (the second highest award available to the US military), a Silver Star, three Bronze Stars and a Presidential Unit Citation for eight months sniping; a considerable achievement.

He died with very little known about him or many pictures to tell the tale, a complete unknown despite his awards, shunning any limelight or notoriety. An unsung hero.

For the first award of the DSC:

"The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 9, 1918 (amended by act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Distinguished Service Cross to Sergeant Adelbert F. Waldron (ASN: RA-11938508/NSN: 4615848), United States Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company B, 3d Battalion, 60th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division.

Sergeant Waldron distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions during the period 16 January 1969 to 4 February 1969, while serving as an expert rifleman during fourteen sniper missions.

On 19 January while his company was being resupplied near Ap Hoa, Kien Hoa Province, approximately forty Viet Cong unleashed a heavy barrage of small arms and automatic weapons fire.

Courageously exposing himself to the fusillade, Sergeant Waldron took up his M21 and killed a number of the aggressors and was instrumental in forcing them to break contact.

On the night of 22 January in an area infested with enemy soldiers and booby traps, he skilfully located a Viet Cong probing force.

Calmly moving through open rice paddies from one firing position to another, he deceived the communists as to the actual strength of his unit and prevented a night assault by the main enemy element.

During the night of 3 February when a nearby Vietnamese Army unit came under attack, he moved toward the battle site and, spotting several Viet Cong attempting to flank the Vietnamese soldiers, stopped them with deadly accurate fire. Later that night he saw another enemy soldier gathering his comrades' weapons and killed him also.

On these and other missions, Sergeant Waldron tirelessly located and made contact with numerically superior hostile forces. By his continuous disregard for his own safety, he prevented ambushes on friendly troops and contributed greatly to the success of allied operations. Sergeant Waldron's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army."



For the second award of the DSC:

"The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 9, 1918 (amended by act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting a Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster in lieu of a Second Award of the Distinguished Service Cross to Sergeant Adelbert F. Waldron (ASN: RA-11938508/NSN: 4615848).

United States Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company B, 3d Battalion, 60th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division.

Sergeant Waldron distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions during the period 5 February 1969 to 29 March 1969, while serving as an expert rifleman on eighteen separate sniper missions in Kien Hoa Province. On 14 February while his squad was conducting a night patrol near Ap Phu Thuan, Sergeant Waldron, observing a numerically superior hostile force manoeuvring to assault a friendly unit, moved rapidly from one position to another to deceive the enemy as to the actual strength of his squad and killed several Viet Cong. As a direct result of his determination, the enemy was routed and their assault prevented.

On 26 February near Phu Tuc, he located a Viet Cong team preparing to launch a rocket on a Mobile Riverine Force. He adroitly shot and killed the soldiers.

At Ap Luong Long Noi on 8 March, his company was attacked by a Viet Cong force. Sergeant Waldron killed many of the communists and forced them to withdraw.

Despite adverse weather conditions, poor illumination and the pressure of arduous missions night after night, he repeatedly located and engaged many hostile elements, killing a number of the enemy.

Sergeant Waldron's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the Military Service and reflects great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army."

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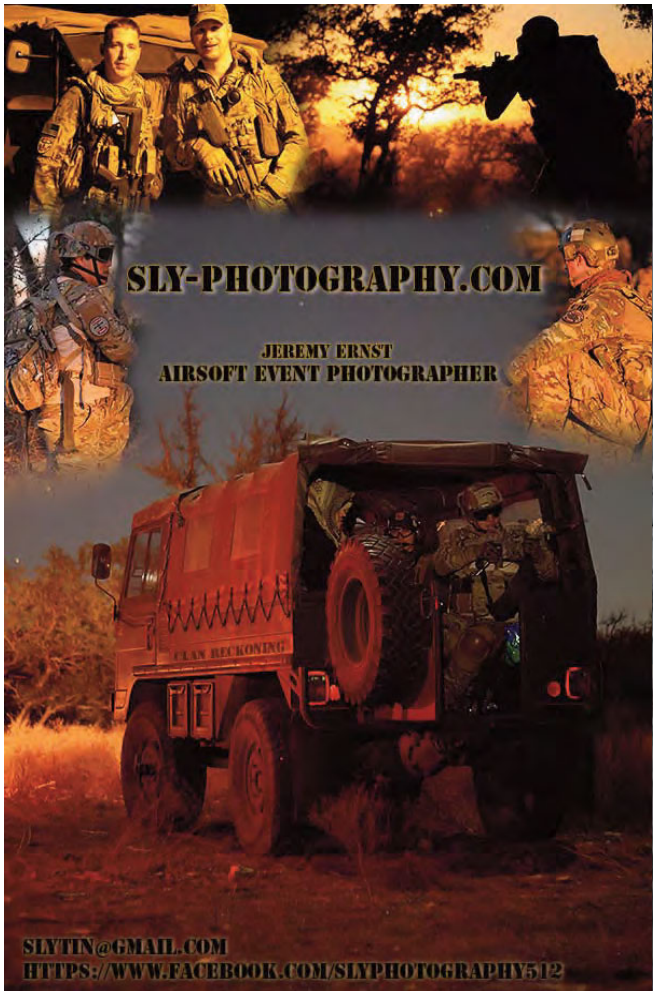
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AS THE DAYS START TO GET LONGER AND THOUGHTS TURN TO GETTING BACK OUT THERE, BILLY'S THOUGHTS TURN TO CAKE!

PAWPERSO AND CAKE



"WHEN YOUR TEAM LEADER IS GETTING HIS BRIEF, OR IS COMING UP WITH HIS ORDERS OR HIS PLAN, THE REST OF YOU ARE NOT ALL JUST SITTING AROUND CHATTING. NO, YOU'RE BUSYING YOURSELVES GETTING YOUR KIT READY."

THE WINTER'S ON THE WAY OUT AT LAST and it's time to look forward with anticipation to the summer's battles, skirmishes, contacts, incursions and general bruise-inducing activities. I don't know about you dear reader but I can't wait!

So as the snowdrops are getting ready to pop out and make the garden look like it's had a spring clean, it's time to clean and check your guns and your soldier suit of choice, repair (maybe our kit and our bodies after a summer of twisted ankles, bruised and scraped forearms and shins and maybe even strained relationships) and, as the evenings get longer and the days get warmer, time to have a quick think about some of Billy's Basics over a hot cuppa – or my own favourite; a bottle of locally produced beer. Beeeeeeeeeeeautiful!!

Now I love a TLA me (although not as much as a cuppa, but it has to be *Twining's Everyday* not the normal factory sweepings you get with some brands), a three letter abbreviation – as if that needed an abbreviation of its own – and the TLAs I want us to look at today are all to do with getting ready and preparation, which is what we're up to right about now.

HAVING YOUR CAKE BUT NOT EATING IT

In order to forge the mechanics of an effective team, to coordinate activities and make sure there's not duplication of effort, the Army came up with the mnemonic "CAKE". This is not, of course, to be confused with a lion's instructions out on the savannah when chasing gazelles across the plains; also CAKE which is "Chase, Attack, Kill, Eat".

Our CAKE stands for Concurrent Activity / Anticipation at all levels / thorough Knowledge of grouping system / Efficient drills for recce and orders. So if you will imagine that you're a unit preparing for a battle or a group getting ready for a game, the same principles apply.

CONCURRENT ACTIVITY:

When your Team Leader is getting his brief, or is coming up with his orders or his plan, the rest of you are not all just sitting around chatting. No, you're busying yourselves getting your kit ready (and if you're a good bloke you would be helping the boss with his kit too, at the very least asking him if he'd like a brew or if there's anything he needs), you're making the best



use of your time, filling mags, checking and rechecking kit, squeezing as much meaningful endeavour out of each minute that you've got.

Don't forget that enforced rest is also an activity, so you don't all have to be busying yourself, if you've had a long day gaming and have night ops to undertake then getting your heads down is a good move.

ANTICIPATION AT ALL LEVELS:

Don't wait to be told what to do like a lemming, use your head and try and anticipate what you're going to be doing, this will make yours and the bosses job much easier and the team more effective and happy. If you've got an idea of what's ahead of you, you might choose to reroll your kit, if it is room clearance, quick and dirty style then you won't need 24 hours of rations and you'll need mags and grenades to hand.

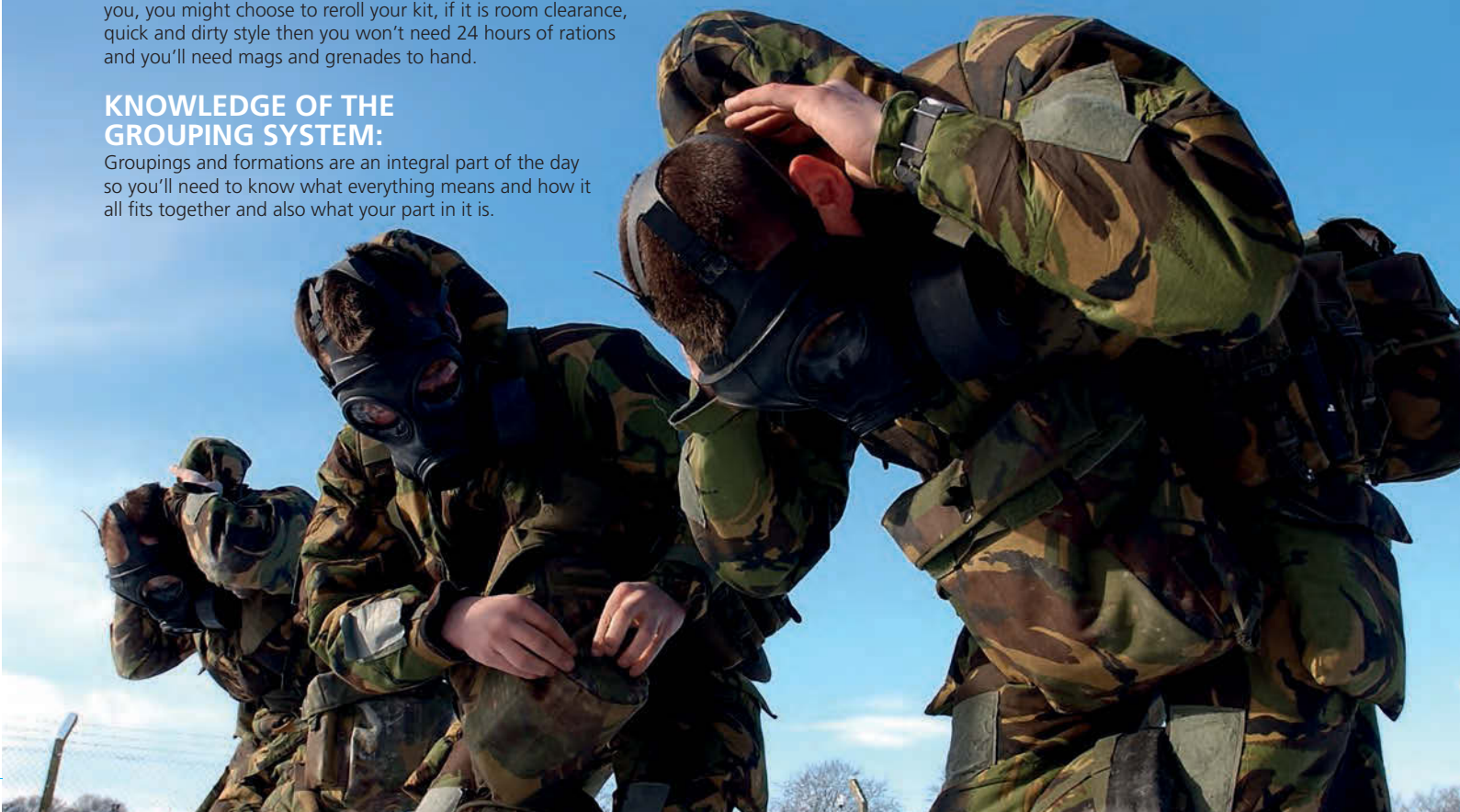
KNOWLEDGE OF THE GROUPING SYSTEM:

Groupings and formations are an integral part of the day so you'll need to know what everything means and how it all fits together and also what your part in it is.

EFFICIENT DRILLS:

In everything you do to be a good team player and a team efficient drills are a must, getting everybody at the right time and in the right place. Now it may be that you do all these things naturally anyway as part of your individual SOPs but if not, you can always fall back on a bit of cake eh?

One more TLA and then I am off for a serious bit of PT across the local wood block. When I am out running I can't help (and really enjoy) thinking through some of these drills as I go along… That would be a good bit of cover… If I was to attack that feature where would I want to approach from? etc. In the assault the Army falls back on a series of drills, called



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Section Battle Drills in order that nothing is left out of the preparation.

Section Battle Drills are a series of set-piece moves on the battlefield that seek to ensure a successful action by concentrating a force onto an area or target for an effect and one of the first ones is preparing yourself for what is ahead, cunningly called "Prep for Battle".

This is referred to as PAWPERSO.

PAWPERSO:

Protection: When you're planning your next, or your initial tactical move or a phase of the assault, you still need to either be in all round defence (if you're out on the ground), or in a secure location that is far enough from the enemy action. If you're putting a full set of orders together and going for a Gold Star then it's best to be well back from the front but with sentries out.

Make sure you detail a few lads nearby to destroy the model in the event of a surprise attack too. If you're giving a quick set of QBOs (Quick Battle Orders) make sure that all the lads are in dead ground or in cover, not just the guy that's issuing them.

Ammunition: Make sure all the lads have got enough ammo and that it's of the right nature for the weapons systems, contacting the enemy is exhausting in terms of sweat and effort but it's also exhausting on the ammo scales too, so make sure the boys are fully bombed up and that the spare mags are sandbagged up and in the reserve group so that they can be easily distributed.

Weapons: All weapons should be battle cleaned with plenty of lubrication, you should have also checked that the sights are in good working order and check when they were last zeroed. If you have had a tough few days and your weapon has been dropped or been bashed about you might need to rezero or check it, after all there's little point firing if your sights are off eh? All you'll do is alert the enemy that you're there.

Make certain if you're close to the enemy that you do this in pairs using the "buddy buddy" system.

Personal Camouflage: Check your cam (and your buddy's) and ensure its fit for purpose but also not just for the terrain that you're in now, make sure it's suitable for the target area. If it isn't then you might need to remove it just before you launch into the final assault. Crawling through the undergrowth is great but if you're final assault leg is across open sandy ground, you don't want to look like a load of Vietnamese Fighting Trees. Be prepared to get rid of it in plenty of time so you and your kit are not impeded.

Equipment: Make sure all the kit that you need for the assault, or your part in it are all checked, tested, rechecked, retested and then stowed away in a suitable pouch with instant access if it's crucial. Think carefully as part of your mental rehearsal about how to use this bit of kit, Nyrex folders with a crib card are a soldier's favourite, the key things to remember are written down so that before you set off you can have a quick look at it. Refresh your memory and rehearse, rehearse, rehearse in your head.

Radios: Batteries, connections and comms will always let you down in the heat of the fight, so check it and recheck it. Comms checks are a confidence checker for everyone and don't let yourself or the team down by not knowing how to use this essential tool. By the same token always practice your drills without radios because you'll still have to fight without them.

Specialist Equipment: Ladders, breaching charges, specialist medical equipment, stretchers or some fancy new missile or Carlos Fandango kit all needs to be in the hands of the guy that knows how to use it and you need to make sure he's in the right place to deploy his skills.

Orders: You'll need to know when they're taking place and when. You don't want to be late, it's a cardinal sin in the Forces and it is just enormously disrespectful, so don't be late, in fact always be early. 5 minutes before. Which is rather rich coming from me because poor old Ed is always having to wait til the last minute for my contributions.

"So it's do as I say not as I do eh…?" or, as I prefer to call it DAISNAID.

Happy Hunting everyone and have a great Spring/Summer.

Billy Out.



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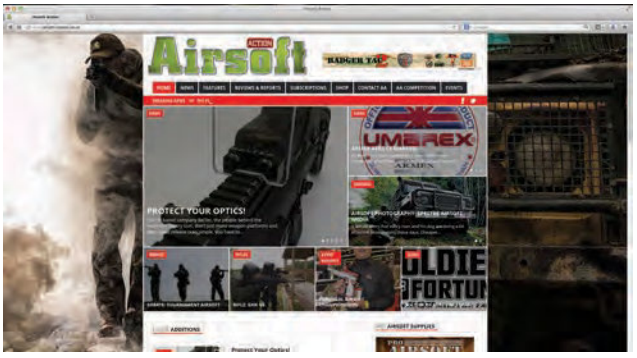
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TAILS OF WAR – MILITARY WORKING DOGS

MILITARY HISTORIAN, WILL FOWLER, LOOKS AT HOW OUR CANINE COMPANIONS HAVE BEEN USED IN TIMES OF WAR FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS.

DOGS WERE FIRST USED IN WAR in ancient times in the Middle East. Archeologists suspect that humans have been using them since the animals were first domesticated more than 15,000 years ago. The Roman armies in 55 and 54 BC encountered British war dogs during the invasion of Britain and in Medieval times the Mastiff was employed as a war dog, some were even equipped with armour and spiked collars.



When in 1415 Sir Piers Legh II was wounded in the battle of Agincourt, his mastiff stood over and protected him for many hours through the battle. The mastiff was later returned to Legh's home and would be the foundation of the Lyme Hall breed.

Over the past centuries and up until today, Military Working Dogs (MWD) have been trained for a wide variety of tasks, including: Attack, Logistics and Communications, Tracking, Scout and Patrol, Tunnel, Guard and Sentry, Explosives and weapons detection and, of course as Regimental Mascots.

The first serious work on training MWD was undertaken by the Imperial Germany Army at the beginning of the 20th Century. World War I saw dogs used by the Belgians to tow carts and Maxim MMG and dogs carried messages and recovered wounded, as well as carrying first aid packs into No Man's Land. The British developed their own MWD training school in the war and one British messenger dog crossed 4,000 yards of very difficult terrain to deliver a message to a HQ, taking less than an hour to make the journey.

In the US Army a dog known as "Sergeant Stubby", though not a trained working dog, was part of the 102nd Infantry, 26th (Yankee) Division where he located wounded, alerted the US soldiers to gas attacks and even attacked a German soldier on a lone reconnaissance patrol!



In World War II the dog who can be credited with "founding" the role of search dogs, was *Rip*.

Rip was a mixed breed terrier who was awarded the Dickin Medal (Animal VC) for bravery in 1945 for his work as a search and rescue dog during the London Blitz. As a stray, he was found in Poplar, East London in 1940 by Mr E. King, an Air Raid Warden and became the service's first search and rescue dog. He is credited with saving the lives of over 100 people. He was the first of twelve Dickin Medal winners to be buried in the PDSA's cemetery in Ilford, Essex. Rip had not been trained as a search and rescue dog but his natural ability and success contributed to the emergency services training dogs in this role.

The expansion in the role of dogs came with mine clearance, which was initially a Royal Engineers task. Dogs were used by all the combatant nations and the Soviet Union even employed them in an anti-tank role with explosive charges strapped to their backs. US Marines employed dogs in the Pacific for patrol and guard duties.

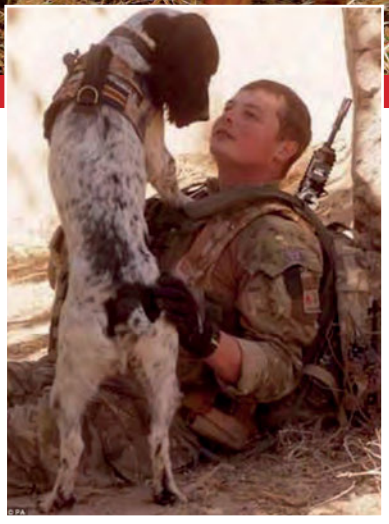
Private Emile Corteil was handler for "Para Dog" *Glen*, a German Shepherd who joined A Coy, 9th Essex Parachute Battalion to assist with guard and patrol duties. Both Corteil and Glen landed safely on D Day but later that day, 19-year old Corteil was killed in a "blue on blue" attack by the RAF and Glen died at his side. His company commander said that handler and dog had been inseparable in life and so they were buried together at Ranville Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery.

Dogs continued to be used in Korean War for mine location while Tracking and Patrol dogs were employed by British and Commonwealth forces in Malayan Emergency in the 1950s and

"DESPITE HIS SEVERE INJURIES, NEMO SAVED THE LIFE OF HIS HANDLER, AIRMAN ROBERT A. THRONEBURG, WHO HAD ALSO BEEN WOUNDED. CRAWLING ACROSS THRONEBURG'S BODY, NEMO GUARDED HIS HANDLER AGAINST ANY WHO DARED TO COME NEAR UNTIL MEDICAL HELP ARRIVED."







ten years later by US and Australia in Vietnam. For the handlers who had bonded with their canine comrades, there was a horrible discovery that the dogs were classified as "surplus" and either destroyed or handed over to the South Vietnamese. During the Vietnam War *Nemo A534*, a German Shepherd Guard Dog stationed at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, alerted his handler to an impending Viet Cong attack in the early hours of December 4, 1966. Nemo was released to attack Viet Cong later in the night but in the process lost an eye and suffered a gunshot wound to the nose. Despite his severe injuries, Nemo saved the life of his handler, Airman Robert A. Throneburg, who had also been wounded. Crawling across Throneburg's body, Nemo guarded his handler against any who dared to come near until medical help arrived.



The British Army used of dogs in the Confrontation with a hostile Indonesia in the jungles of north Borneo, where tracker dogs were usually Labradors and German Shepherds were used as patrol dogs.

In Northern Ireland weapons and explosives search dogs played a vital role and in August 2009 and a special memorial was held in England at the National Memorial Arboretum in honour of the six dog handlers and two dogs killed in the Troubles. Called "The Red Paw Memorial", the event was named after the badge worn by the members of the Army Dog Unit of Northern Ireland, which was founded in May 1973 and disbanded in August 2007.

Most search dogs are a "gun dog" type that is energetic, keen to please and diligent. Often the best dogs are crosses – combining the gun dog with another type. One RAVC handler told me that the best dog which he worked in Afghanistan, was a cross Spaniel and Miniature Poodle. Training includes acclimatising them to the sound of gunfire, helicopter and vehicle engines and "Doggles" are used to protect their eyes from dust and glare and ear defenders to protect their hearing. The Americans have developed dog body armour, to protect against fragments and small arms fire.

The British favour a reward approach to training – no snacks but simply a game with a ball. As an ex-Police dog handler explained to me the advantage of the ball reward is that if trouble kicks off the ball can be thrown away from the trouble and the dog removed from danger.

Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have produced a new breed of handlers and canine heroes and new roles.

In March 21, 2007 a young US Marine Corps dog handler, Corporal Dustin Lee, was mortally wounded in a rocket attack in Iraq. His dog *Lex*, though injured, survived and the family fought to have the dog repatriated so that they could adopt it. They won and moreover the dog was awarded an honorary Purple Heart and now helps wounded veterans recover in hospitals in the USA.



Treo, a Black Labrador search dog working with the British Army, was awarded the Dickin Medal in a ceremony at the Imperial War Museum. He had worked in Afghanistan with his handler Sergeant Dave Heyhoe locating Taliban IEDs. On August 15, 2008, he found a "daisy chain" consisting of several IEDs linked together concealed by the side of a path and a month later he saved a platoon by finding a similar device. At the presentation Sergeant Heyhoe explained. "Me and the dog have got a rapport. We have got to understand each other.


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Without that we can't be effective on the ground. He must know that when I want him to search somewhere, that's where he goes. Everyone will say that he is just a military working dog and yes, he is but he is also a very good friend of mine. We look after each other."

One of the most remarkable dog stories to come out of Afghanistan was that of *Sabi*, an Australian Army Black Labrador IED search dog that was lost during a contact with the Taliban in which Australian SAS Trooper Mark Donaldson won the VC. Despite an extensive search, Sabi was listed as MIA. A year later a Black Labrador was seen by a US patrol operating in the area and responded to commands in English. It was *Sabi*. When Donaldson heard the news he said "She's the last piece of the puzzle. Having Sabi back gives some closure for the handler and the rest of us that served with her in 2008. It's a fantastic morale booster for the guys."

Two British RAVC dog handlers have been killed in Afghanistan searching for IEDs. Twenty four year old L/Cpl Kenneth Rowe, from Newcastle and his dog, *Sasha*, were killed in an ambush on a routine patrol in Helmand. Cpl Rowe had extended his tour to ensure that the incoming units would have a search dog to support them.

In March 2011, L Cpl Liam Tasker was killed by a sniper whilst on patrol, his dog *Theo* survived. Theo was taken back to base but suffered a seizure and also died. Following an autopsy which could not determine the cause of the dog's demise, it is widely believed that Theo died of stress brought on by his handler's death. The pair had uncovered 14 IEDs and hoards of weapons in five months – a record for a dog and his handler in the conflict. Theo was posthumously awarded the Dickin Medal in October 2012.

There have been numerous dog heroes over the centuries, but in the 21st Century *Cairo* stands out.

In May 2011, the US Navy SEAL Team 6 that killed Osama bin Laden had a Belgian Malinois search dog named *Cairo* with his handler on the raid. The role of the dog would have been to find bin Laden if he had a secret hiding place and was carried in a special harness and fast roped down with his handler. During the operation Cairo and his handler helped to secure the perimeter. Soon after the operation Cairo and SEAL Team 6 met President Obama at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. His handler joked with the President, who is a well-known dog lover, that if he wanted to meet Cairo he would need to bring treats.



At the end of WW2, as US servicemen were being shipped back to the States, a dog called "Spotty" was found dockside just prior to the last sailing of the Queen Elizabeth. A tag on his coat said, "My name is Spotty. Two years old. Housebroken. Love to ride in trucks. Been with boys two years in combat. But just could not make the ship. Won't you please give me a home?"



He was picked up by two Red Cross girls who found his company and promised to try and get him a home. Spotty was tied up but broke leash and boarded the ship but was found and put off. Picked up by same two Red Cross girls again, they found he could go home if someone looked after him and permission granted which allowed him to sail on the Aquitania – but the sailing was cancelled. Eventually Spotty sailed on the Queen Mary and made it to New York in November, 1945 – to be greeted by his former master.



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AMERICAN SNIPER

BY CHRIS KYLE WITH SCOTT MCEWEN AND JIM DEFELICE

WITH THE RECENT FILM RELEASE AND HIS KILLER'S TRIAL RECENTLY ENDED, KRIS ROBERTS REVIEWS "THE LEGEND" CHRIS KYLE'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

"She's got a grenade," said the chief. "That's a Chinese grenade."...

I hesitated...

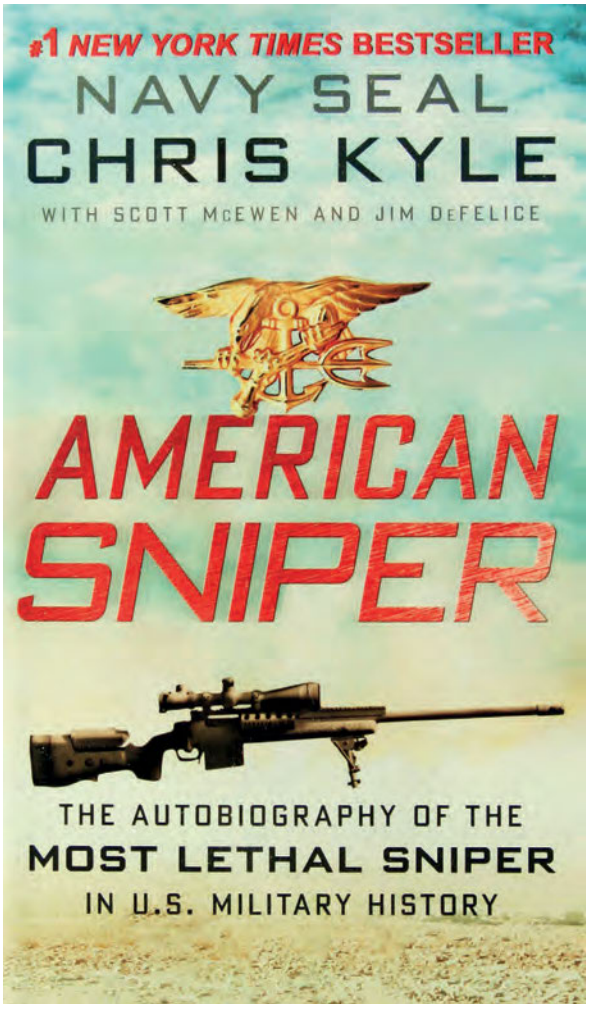
"Shoot!" said the chief.

I pushed my finger against the trigger. The bullet leapt out. I shot. The grenade dropped. I fired again as the grenade blew up.

It was the first time I'd killed anyone while I was on the sniper rifle. And the first time in Iraq – and the only time – I killed anyone other than a male combatant.

Content

"American Sniper" is the autobiography of Navy Seal sniper Chris Kyle. Recorded as having the most sniper kills in the history of the U.S military, Kyle built up a formidable reputation during his four tours of Iraq. Called "The Legend" by the American forces he fought to protect and labelled "The Devil" by his enemies who placed a bounty on his head, Kyle gives a graphic account of battle in some of the twenty first century's most dangerous warzones.



With the inclusion of his early days and family life, "American Sniper" paints a broader picture of how a young and energetic young man came to be an idealistic and aggressive killer for his nation.

Impressions

It is worth stating that I have not seen the recently released movie by Clint Eastwood, nor have I included any outside influences or events. As with all of my book reviews I have reflected only on the information contained within the book's pages.

Most memoirs are written by old veterans who have had a lifetime on which to reflect and adapt to the experience of war. Kyle has written his account in the immediate years after his return home, so his adaptation and willingness to change is in its infancy. You can see the inner conflict is still at a heightened and raw state by the inconsistencies on show.

Several times throughout the book, Kyle feels compelled to repeat certain statements and on occasion contradicts himself. It is almost as if he is aware that the publication of his life will leave him open to a huge amount of criticism and he has prepared his defences ready for the battle to come.

I found myself wanting to like the author more than I actually did, such is the bluntness and hard to swallow simplicity of his views. It was the inclusion of glimpses of his home life and the sections written by his wife that made the book for me, although even then much of what was said seemed too considered and overly protective. Some will hero-worship Kyle for his abilities in combat and commitment to his country, others will condemn him for his single-minded approach to religion and duty. This is a book that will divide readers.

I was glad that I read Kyle's story but I honestly felt that this was only half the tale. There are other perspectives and gaps in the journey that were glaring in their omission. It seems inevitable that the actions and life of Chris Kyle will be retold many times over and when it is, I hope these details will be in place and a fuller account created.

Admirable and questionable in equal measure, this book deserves to be read with an open mind and a willingness to reconsider your own opinions and judgements. Far more than a story of bombs and bullets, it separates itself from its peers by addressing the grey area of modern warfare, where the enemy is not easily identified and where human decency can be a matter of life or death.

"American Sniper" is a book about love and hate, good and evil and the attraction of violence. All told through the eyes of a god-fearing American patriot. How you interpret that says as much about the reader as it does the author.

"People back home, people who haven't been in war, or at least not that war, sometimes don't seem to understand how the troops in Iraq acted. They're surprised – shocked – to discover we often joked about death, about things we saw.

Maybe it seems cruel or inappropriate. Maybe it would be, under different circumstances. But in the context of where we were, it made a lot of sense. We saw terrible things, and lived through terrible things."

INFORMATION

AMERICAN SNIPER

Available on Amazon and from all good book shops.

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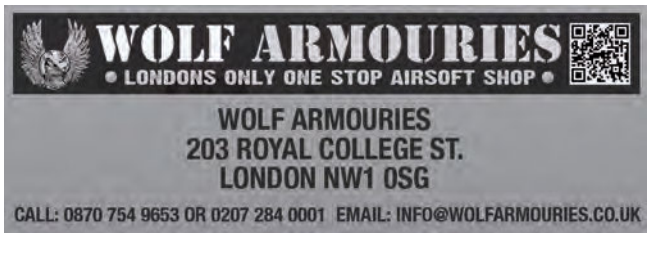
















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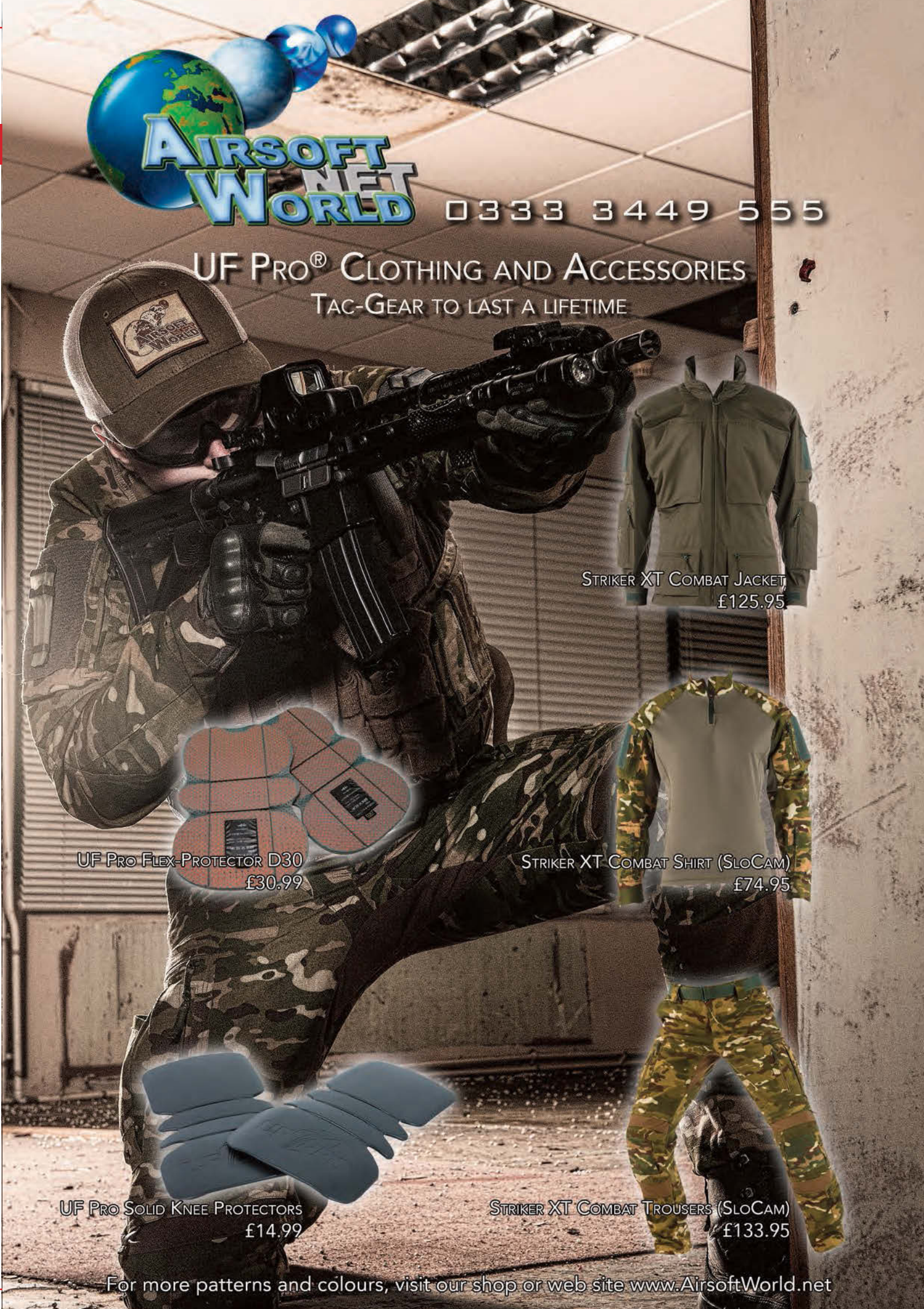
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